

# The Promised **Mahdi**

The Celestial Axis of the World of Existence  
and the Universal Rule of the Noble Imam (AS)



**Translated from the Original Persian into English**

**Mohammad Mehdi Baghi**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى:

" يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَ أَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَ أُولَى الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ "

سورة النساء ٤-٥٩ آية

" O you who have faith! Obey *Allah*, and obey the  
Apostle, and those charged with authority among you..."  
(Sura Nisa, No. 4, Verse 59)

The traditions found in this book are based on the  
fulfilment of this very holy verse.

Note:

The second edition has been re-edited.

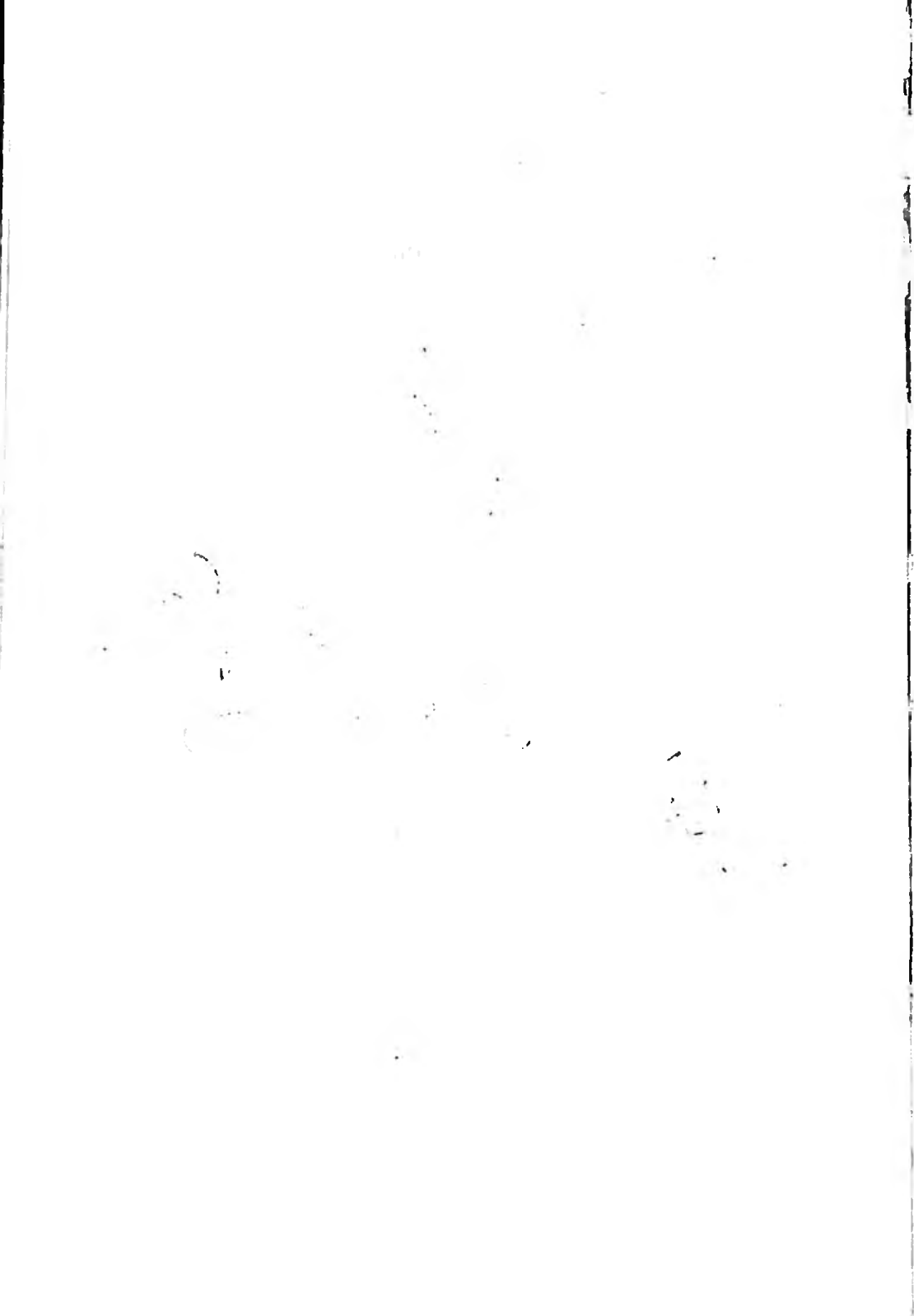
**The Promised Mahdī**  
**The Celestial Axis of the World of Existence**  
**and the Universal Rule of the Noble Imam (AS)**

Collection of Traditions  
Mainly from Volume 23 of 'Allāma Majlisī's *Biḥār al-Anwār*

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## Section 1

From the Auspicious Birth of the Imam of the Age (AS)  
to the martyrdom his father [Imam 'Askarī (AS)]

### 1. The Manner of his Birth

Intense strangulation was imposed by the state at the time of Imam 'Askarī (AS) and the noble Imam was totally under the supervision of the state, since those in power were aware of the fact that the one who will make the palace of the tyrants collapse and will remove their tyrannical rule will be sired by Imam 'Askarī. It was in this light that they made attempts at preventing the birth of that divine treasure and the justice administering Imam.<sup>1</sup>

The 'Abbāsīd Mu'tamad had appointed some midwives and spies to enter Imam 'Askarī's house unannounced and obtain intelligence as to the Imam's (AS) wife. They followed Pharaoh's footsteps. When Pharaoh understood that his reign would fall by an Israelite man. So, he dispatched inspectors to

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<sup>1</sup> Imam 'Askarī is reported as saying: "It has been for two reasons that the Umayyads and the 'Abbāsīds unsheathed their swords to confront us: firstly, they are aware that their caliphate is illegitimate and are afraid that we claim our right to caliphate and the caliphate may be established in its legitimate seat; secondly, having been informed of consecutively transmitted Prophetic traditions, they know that their tyrannical rule will be removed by a riser from our house and they entertain no doubt that they are the tyrants; as a consequence of which they have left no stone unturned to murder the Prophet's (SAW) *Ahl ul-Bayt* and discontinue the noble Prophet's (SAW) line of descent such that they may prevent the birth of the riser or murder him, but God's will is different from theirs and it is His Will that they remain ignorant of the riser and He preserve His friend and perfect his luminosity, see Khātūnābādī's *Arba'in*, p. 52.

keep an eye on Israelite pregnant women and slay boys such that prophet Moses (AS) may not see the light. His birth was concealed and he was protected by divine omnipotence. Similarly, the birth of the soul of the world, His Eminence the Lord of the Age the protection of his noble life had been willed by God, was concealed from the public until his light gloriously illumined the world at the daybreak of mid Sha'bān<sup>1</sup> as it will be recounted below.

- a. In his *Kamāl al-Dīn* Shaykh Ṣadūq narrates through his own transmission chain on the authority of Hakīma Khātūn as saying one day Imam 'Askarī (AS) called me and said: "Dear aunt! Have supper with us this evening as it is mid Sha'bān, when God Almighty has willed to cause the rise of His argument [Imam Mahdī (AS)] on the earth." I asked: "Who's his mother?" He replied: "Narjis." I inquired: "May I be your sacrifice, by God I don't see any tokens of conception in her." He said: "It's as I told you."

Hakīma Khātūn says: "I entered, saluted them, and seated myself. Then, Narjis Khātūn came to help me take off my shoes, saying: 'My lady, how do you do? I replied: 'You are my lady and that of my household.' She declined, saying: 'Dear aunt, how would it be possible?' I told her: 'My daughter, God Almighty will grant you a son very soon on this same night who shall be the lord of earth and hereafter. Having heard my words, Narjis seated herself and her countenance was covered by a veil of shyness. Having had established by evening prayer, I prepared by bed and turned into it. I woke up midnight to establish my supererogatory prayers, but Narjis was still asleep and nothing had happened. I said some more prayers and went to bed to wake up soon in fear seeing that Narjis was awake establishing her prayers. I lost my patience and was in doubt, until I heard the Imam's sweet voice addressing me: 'Hasten not, dear aunt! What

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<sup>1</sup> 15 Sha'bān 255/29 July 869 or 15 Sha'bān 256/18 July 870, tr.

is supposed to realize will soon occur.' I began reciting the Qur'an, reciting *Sūrat al-Sajda* (32) and *Sūrat Yā-Sīn* (36). Then, I noticed that Narjis woke up in fear. I hastened towards her. I invoked God and asked her: 'Do you feel anything?' She replied: 'Yes, dear aunt.' I said unto her: 'Maintain your composure and have heart! This is the glad tidings which I bore.'

Hakīma Khātūn says: "I felt weak and lost my concentration. Narjis was overtaken by travail. I heard the Imam's voiced before long and I removed the cover from the face of the infant. I saw him in genuflection. I took him in my arms and noted that he was clean. Imam 'Askarī called unto me: 'Dear aunt, bring my son to me!' I took him to the Imam who laid his hand the infant's back, put his feet on his breast, put his tongue in his hand and caressed his eyes, ears, and joints, saying: 'My son, speak!' The infant said: "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, the only God. He has no partner. I also bear witness that Muḥammad (SAW) is His messenger.' Then, he paid homage to the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS), and other Infallible Imams in order. When he reached his father, he saluted him and stopped. Imam 'Askarī said: "Dear aunt, take him to his mother to salute her, and bring him back to me.' I took him to his mother. He greeted her and I took him back to the Imam who said to me: "Dear aunt, please return on the seventh day after his birth."

Hakīma Khātūn says: "I went to the Imam the day after to greet the Imam. I inquired about the infant and removed the cover, but I did not find him. I asked the Imam: 'May I be your sacrifice! Where is your newly born son?' He replied: 'We put him at the disposal of the One to Him vested Moses' (AS) mother the custody of her son."

Hakīma Khātūn says: "When I joined the holy audience of the Imam (AS) on the seventh day after the birth, I

greeted him and seated myself. Imam said: 'Bring my child to me!' I wrapped him in a cloth and took him to the noble Imam. Similar to the last time, he held his child in his arms and put his tongue into his mouth, as if he was feeding him with milk or honey, then said: 'My son, speak!' The infant began speaking and this time also bore witness to divine oneness and paid homage to the noble prophet Muḥammad (SAW) and the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS), and the Infallible Imams one by one until he saluted his father and recited the followed Qur'anic verse (28:5-6): 'And We willed to do a favor to those who were weak and oppressed in the land, to make them rulers, to make them the inheritors, to establish them in the land, and We allowed Pharaoh and Hāmān and their hosts to receive from them that which they feared.'

Mūsā ibn Muḥammad, the transmitter of this tradition, is reported as saying: "I inquired 'Uqba, the Imam's (AS) servant about this matter and asked him about the event and He confirmed Ḥakīma Khātūn's report."<sup>1</sup>

- b. In his *Kamāl al-Dīn*, Shaykh Ṣadūq, may God have mercy on him, narrated from Imam 'Askarī's (AS) maid servant as saying: "When the Imam of the Age (AS) was borne, I saw that his face was luminous and his light ascended to the heavens and I saw white birds descending from the heaven, caressing the blessed face of the infant by their feathers and then soared onto the heaven. When I talked to Imam 'Askarī (AS) about that matter, he smilingly said: 'Those were the angels descending from the heavens to receive blessings from

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 2, tradition 3. It is reported from Ḥakīma Khātūn as saying: "After a lapse of forty days from the birth of the Imam (AS), I went to Imam 'Askarī's (AS) home and met our Lord, the Lord of the Age (AS), who was walking at home. I had not seen any face prettier than his and had not heard anyone speaking more eloquently than him. Imam 'Askarī (AS) said: "This is the dear child who is honored and cherished by God." Ibid, vol. 51, p. 27.

that noble person and they shall be his supporters upon his rise.”<sup>1</sup>

- c. Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān is also reported as saying: “When the Imam of the Age (AS) was born, rays of light shone from him and illumined the heaven. Then he prostrated himself before God, then he rose and recited this Qur’anic verse: ‘I bear witness that there is no god besides Allah and He is the only God, and the angels and men of knowledge rise to administer justice. There is no god but Him, the Mighty, the Wise. Indeed the [perfect] religion before God is Islam.’”<sup>2</sup>
- d. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said: “All the children born on the night of the birth of the Imam of the Age (AS) will be believers and if they have been born in the land of the infidels, by the blessing of the eminent Imam, they will be taken to the land of the faithful.”<sup>3</sup>

## 2. The Shī‘īs’ being informed of the Birth

When his son, the last divine Argument was born, Imam ‘Askarī was seriously concealing his beliefs for discretionary purposes and had to keep his birth a secret. On the other hand, he had to take certain measures to protect the Shī‘īs from disintegration. Such measures include the following.

- a. He asked his noble aunt, Ḥakīma, at his home on that night so that she may witness the birth of Imam Mahdī (AS) and report it when the need arises.<sup>4</sup>
- Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allah Muṭahharī says: “After

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 5, tradition 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 15, tradition 19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Imam ‘Askarī (AS) is reported to have said to Ḥakīma Khātūn: “When I leave this world and you see that my followers disagree on imamate, notify their trustworthy people of the birth of the last divine Argument whose birth you witnessed, but it must be concealed by you and them for reasons of a discretionary nature. see *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 18, tradition 25.

Imam 'Askarī's (AS) demise I went to meet Ḥakīma Khātūn to inquire about divine Argument whose imamate was disagreed upon by people. She said: 'Seat yourself.' I did, and then she said: 'God Almighty has never abandoned the world without Argument and has never appointed two brothers, except Imam Ḥasan (AS) and Imam Ḥusayn (AS). Further, He has vested imamate with Imam Ḥusayn's descendants, as He vested Hārūn's offspring with prophethood.<sup>1</sup> It will be owing to divine Argument's absence after Imam 'Askarī's (AS) demise, the Muslim community (*umma*) will be led to perplexity as divine trial so that truth may be distinguished from falsehood and the followers of truth be steadfast in their beliefs and be victorious in such trial. Nonetheless, followers of falsehood will entertain doubts in their hearts, will be weak in their beliefs, and will be disgraced in that divine trial.' I inquired: 'O noble lady! Does Imam 'Askarī have a child?' She smiled and replied: 'If Imam 'Askarī has no children, then who will succeed him as the divine Argument?' I said: 'O noble lady! Inform me of the manner of his birth and absence!' Then, Ḥakīma Khātūn notified him of the manner of the birth of that spiritual pole (*quṭb*) of the world and the lord of both worlds."<sup>2</sup>

- b. To ward off any doubts by his friends and followers, Imam 'Askarī (AS) had some sheep slaughtered as sacrifice offering on the seventh day after his son's birth (*'aqīqa*) and impart the news to his trustworthy followers.

Ṣadūq narrates through his own transmission chain from Abū Ja'far 'Umarī as saying: "When the Imam of the Age (AS) was born, his noble father, Imam 'Askarī

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<sup>1</sup> God Almighty appoints the Imams and such appointment solely rests upon His Discretion and Wisdom and He is not supposed to produce arguments in this respect.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 11, tradition 14.

(AS) called ‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘īd and asked him to purchase ten thousand *ratl*<sup>1</sup> of bread and ten thousand *ratl* of meat and distribute them among Banū Hāshim. He also asked him to slaughter some sheep as sacrifice offering on the seventh day after his son’s birth.<sup>2</sup>

- c. Imam ‘Askarī (AS) write letters to some of his followers notifying them of the birth of the Imam of the Age (AS). Ṣadūq narrates through his own transmission chain from Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan ibn Ishāq as saying: “Upon the birth of the Imam of the Age (AS), an epistle was sent by my lord Imam ‘Askarī (AS) to my grandfather, Aḥmad ibn Ishāq whose autograph read: ‘That divinely promised child was born. You must conceal it from the public. We have only informed our close relatives for blood ties and our followers for their adherence. We wished to inform you of it so that God Almighty may grant you joy, as we rejoiced at it.”<sup>3</sup>
- d. To prevent his followers from entertaining any doubts, Imam ‘Askarī (AS) showed his dear child to some of his relatives and companions. There were two kinds of visits: public gatherings attended by some of his followers and personal meetings at which some worthy and reliable people were granted such honor.

#### d.1. Public Gatherings.

- a. Ṣadūq through his own transmission chain narrates from Abū Ghānim, Imam ‘Askarī’s (AS) servant as saying: “A child was born to Imam ‘Askarī (AS) who was name

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<sup>1</sup> A unit of measure equal to 401. 674 or 397. 26 g.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 5, tradition 9. It is also narrated from Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Kūfī as saying: “Imam ‘Askarī (AS) designated some individuals by their names and sent to each of them a slaughtered sheep, saying: “this is the sacrificial offering for the birth of my son, Muḥammad (AS), on the occasion of the seventh day after his birth. Ibid, vol. 51, p. 15, tradition 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 16, tradition 21.

Muhammad. On the third day of his birth, the dear child was shown to his close companions, saying: 'This is your lord and my successor. He will be the riser whom people will await when the world brims over with injustice and tyranny. He will rise and will administer justice throughout the world.'<sup>1</sup>

- b. Shaykh Ṭūsī, may God have mercy on him, narrates from Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn Mālik Fazārī, and the latter narrates on the authority of some Shī'īs including 'Alī ibn Balāl, Aḥmad ibn Hilāl, Muḥammad ibn Mu'āwiya, and Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb as saying: "We had joined the audience of Imam 'Askarī (AS) to inquire about his successor. There were forty of us. 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd arose inquiring: 'O son of Allah's messenger (SW), I wish to ask you something regarding which you are better informed than me.' Imam (AS) replied: 'You may take your seat now.' Upset by Imam's (AS) words, 'Uthmān rose up to leave, but Imam (AS) said: 'Nobody is allowed to leave the session!' After a while, Imam (AS) called 'Uthman and the latter arose. Imam (AS) asked: 'Should I tell you why you've come here?' They said: 'Yes, O son of the messenger of Allah (SAW).' He said: 'You've come to inquire about my successor and divine Argument.' They said: 'Quite so.' Then, a prince, pretty as the moon bearing utmost resemblance to Imam 'Askarī (AS) appeared. Imam (AS) said: 'This is you Imam after me, my successor, obey him, and do not disintegrate else you'll be drowned in the abyss of different dogmas. Beware! This is your only opportunity and you'll see him but today. Admit to what 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd says to you. Obey him, since he is the successor to your Imam and in charge of affairs.'<sup>2</sup>

The above instances constitute public meetings at which Imam 'Askarī (AS) introduced his followers to their

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 5, tradition 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 346.



Imam a few days after Imam Mahdī's (AS) birth and a few days antedating his martyrdom. Between these two occasions, there were personal meetings as well some of which will be mentioned below.

#### d.2. Personal Meetings.

One of the most momentous personal meetings was with Aḥmad ibn Ishāq.

Ṣadūq through his own transmission chain narrates from Aḥmad ibn Ishāq as saying: I had joined Imam 'Askarī's (AS) audience intending to inquire about his successor. Before raising my question, he said: 'O Aḥmad ibn Ishāq! Since the day when God Almighty created prophet Adam (AS), the earth has never been free from divine Argument and it shall not be without one to the Day of Resurrection. Through His Argument, God Almighty removes afflictions from the inhabitants of the earth and it is for his sake that He sends down rain and makes the blessings of the earth appear.' I asked: 'O son of Allah's messenger (AS)! Who will be your successor and the Imam after you?' Imam (AS) rose up instantly and entered his home and came out before long, holding a child on his shoulder whose face shone like full moon and appeared to be three years of age. Imam (AS) said: 'O Aḥmad ibn Ishāq! Were it not for your closeness to God and your exalted position with divine arguments, I would never show you my child. His name and *kunya*<sup>1</sup> resembles those of the messenger of God (SAW). He is the one who shall fill the earth with justice after it brims over with injustice and tyranny.

"O Aḥmad ibn Ishāq! His similitude in this community is like Khidr and Dū al-Qarnayn. By God! He shall be concealed and everyone shall perish except for those who shall be steadfast on the path of

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<sup>1</sup> Patronymic with an onomastic element usually composed of *Abī*, *Abā*, and *Abū* ("father), or *umm* ("mother"), plus a name.

imamate and shall have the opportunity to pray for hastening his rise.' Aḥmad ibn Ishāq said: 'Is there a sign by which my heart may rest in peace?' Then, the noble child spoke in eloquent Arabic: 'I am the remainder of divine arguments on earth and the avenger of His enemies. Do not look for further signs after witnessing this.'<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Name, Title, and *Kunya* of the Noble Imam (AS).

#### 3. 1. His Name

The name and *kunya* of the noble Imam (AS) are those of the noble Prophet (SAW). He said: "Maḥdī (AS) is one of my descendants and his name and *kunya* are those of mine."<sup>2</sup>

#### Prohibition of Explicitly Mentioning His Original Name

It is explicitly mentioned in many a tradition that the noble Imam (AS) should not be mentioned by his original name.

- a. Ṣadūq through his transmission chain narrates from Abū Hāshim Ja'farī as saying: "I heard from Imam Hādī (AS) that while narrating a tradition said: 'It is prohibited for you to mention that noble Imam (AS) by his original name.'"<sup>3</sup>

Religious scholars disagree on this ruling; some of them, like Shaykh Ḥurr 'Āmilī, regard it absolutely lawful while concealing one's beliefs for discretionary purposes. Some, like Shaykh Mufid, have said that except for reciting the prayers narrated by the Infallibles (AS), it will be absolutely unlawful to mention him by his original name. The author of *Kifāyat al-Muwahḥidīn* is one of these scholars. Some scholars, like Shaykh Anṣārī, maintain that it is not recommended. Some, like Muḥaqqiq Dāmād, have also said that such

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 72, tradition 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 158, tradition 1.

prohibition is only applicable to mentioning his name at public gatherings.

What is not disagreed upon is that mentioning the noble Imam (AS) by his original name is unlawful at the time of fear, an instance of which would be mentioning it at a gathering attended by enemies of religion in which case it is obligatory to conceal it for discretionary purposes.

- b. Ṣadūq, through his transmission chain, narrates from ‘Alī ibn ‘Āṣim Kūfī as saying: “Imam of the Age (AS) in a noble epistle of his wrote: ‘Damned will be the one who mentions me by my name at public gatherings.’”<sup>1</sup>

It is worthy of note, however, that this ruling is only applicable to mentioning his noble original name and the same is not true with mentioning his other noble names and titles.

- c. It is narrated from Imam Hādī (AS) as saying: “It is not lawful to mention that noble Imam (AS) by his original name.” The narrator inquired: “How should he be mentioned?” He replied: “Say: ‘The Argument from the house of Muḥammad (SAW).’”<sup>2</sup>
- d. It is also narrated from Imam Riḍā (AS) as saying: “That noble Imam (AS) should not be mentioned by his original name.” The narrator, Rayyān, inquired: “Would it be lawful to say the lord of absence, the lord of the time?” Imam (AS) replied: “These are all lawful and I have only prohibited mentioning him by his original name.”<sup>3</sup>

### 3. 2. His Titles

The noble Imam’s (AS) well-known titles include: *Qā’im* (Riser), *Mahdī* (Rightly Guided), *Muntaẓar* (the Awaited), *Baqiyat Allah* (God’s Remainder), *Hujjat* (Argument), *Manṣūr* (Victorious), *Ṣāḥib al-Zamān* (Lord of the Time), and *Ṣāḥib al-*

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 33, tradition 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 158, tradition 1.

<sup>3</sup> *‘Awālim*, vol. 1, p. 175, tradition 190.

*Amr* (Lord of the Command), each of which reflects of the characteristics of the noble Imam (AS).

### ● *Qā'im* (Riser)

There are some traditions transmitted concerning the reasons behind such appellation.

- a. It is narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) as saying: "The Imam of the Age (AS) is called the Riser, since he rises to establish justice.
- b. Thumālī asked Imam Bāqir (AS): "Are you not all Risers to establish justice?" Imam (AS) replied: "Quite so! We are all Risers to establish justice." He inquired: "Why has that noble Imam (AS) called by this title?" Imam (AS) replied: "When my grandfather, Imam Ḥusayn (AS) was martyred, angels mourned in the heavens and asked God: 'Do you forgive those who martyred your elected one and the son of Your elected one?' The Lord of the world thus revealed unto them: "Rest assured! By My Glory and Omnipotence I shall take My Revenge on all of them, even though some time may elapse." Then He cast aside the veils before their eyes and they saw the Imams (AS), descendants of Imam Ḥusayn (AS) and noticed that one of them has arisen while establishing his prayers. God Almighty said: "I shall take my Revenge on them all by this one."<sup>1</sup>

### The Reason of Standing up When He Is Called by This Title.

- a. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) was inquired about the reason of the rise. He replied: "Since that noble Imam (AS) shall have a prolonged period of concealment from the public; though owing to his great affection for his friends, he will look at those who call him by this title remembering his fortune and regretting his solitude. It will be befitting that when the noble lord looks at the obedient

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 28, tradition 1.

servant, the latter rises to pay homage to him. Then, one should rise and ask God Almighty for hastening the rise of the noble Imam (AS).

- b. It is also narrated that when Di'bal Khuzā'i, reciting his poem at the presence of Imam Ridā (AS), he recited the following couplet:

It shall be inevitable that an Imam shall rise from amongst us, and he shall rise in the name of God and divine blessings,

Imam Ridā arose, laid his hands on his head and lowering his head a little bit, he prayed and said:

“O God! Hasten his arrival and render us aid through him.”<sup>1</sup>

### ● *Muntazar* (The Awaited)

It is another title of the noble Imam (AS). Imam Jawād (AS) was asked about this title of the Imam of Age (AS). He replied: “Since there shall be a prolonged period of concealment for him from the public and sincere believers await his arrival.”<sup>2</sup>

### ● *Baqiyat Allah* (Remainder of God)

- a. It is narrated from Imam Bāqir (AS) as saying: “Upon his arrival, this blessed Qur’anic verse (11:86) shall be the first words to be uttered by him: “That which is left by Allah for you is better for you, if you are believers.” Then, he shall say: “I am the Remainder of Allah, namely the Remainder of Divine Arguments.”<sup>3</sup>
- b. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) was inquired: “In what manner shall that Noble Imam be paid homage?” he replied: “Greetings on you, o Remainder of God!”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *al-Qaṭra*, vol. 1, p. 487, tradition 596.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 157, tradition 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 62, tradition 62.

<sup>4</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 411, tradition 2.

## ● *Ṣāhib al-Amr* (Lord of Command)

Shaykh Ṣadūq narrates on the authority of Rayyān as saying: "I asked Imam Ridā (AS): 'Are you the Lord of Command?' He replied: 'Yes, I am the Lord of Command, but not that Lord of Command who shall fill the world with justice after it brimmed over with injustice.'"<sup>1</sup>

## 4. The Noble Imam's Appearance

The noble Imam (AS) more than anyone else closely resembles the messenger of God (SAW) and the prophetic splendor is reflected in the noble Imam's countenance.

- a. It is narrated from the messenger of God (SAW) as saying: "Mahdī is one of my descendants. His name, *kunya*, appearance, and character will closely resemble those of mine more than anyone else."<sup>2</sup>
- b. Imam 'Alī (AS), the Commander of the Faithful, looking at his son, Imam Ḥusayn (AS), said: "There shall be son from the offspring of the Noble Prophet (SAW) whose name, appearance, and character shall resemble his ... His forehead will be long, his nose slender and long, his belly fleshy, his thighs wide, and his noble teeth separated."<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, it is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Alī (AS), as saying: "A descendant of mine shall rise in the last days of the world whose countenance will of white and rosy hue, fleshy belly, wide thighs, and strong shoulders. There will be two marks on his back, one bearing the hue of his complexion and the other resembling the prophetic seal of the noble Prophet (SAW)."<sup>4</sup>

- c. The messenger of Allah is reported as saying: "Mahdī

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 322, tradition 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 72, tradition 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 39, tradition 19.

<sup>4</sup> There was a sign on the noble shoulder of the noble prophet (SAW) reflecting the seal of prophethood by which he was identified as the prophet.

shall be one of my descendants. His countenance will be like a luminous star. He will be of white complexion like the Arabs. His body shall resemble Israelites, namely robust."<sup>1</sup>

- d. 'Alī ibn Mahziyār who had the honor to join the noble Imam's (AS) audience, thus depicts his appearance: "He was of high stature, like a cypress. His limbs were proportionate, not too short and not too long, but moderate and robust. His noble head was round. His forehead was bright and luminous. His eyebrows were long, resembling a bow. His nose was slender, a little bit protruding in the middle. There was a beautiful mole on his right cheek."<sup>2</sup>
- e. Having witnessed the noble Imam's (AS) birth, Ḥakīma Khātūn said: "Narjis Khātūn gave birth to an infant who resembled moon in beauty. It was written on his right arm the Qur'anic verse (17:81): 'Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Certainly falsehood is ever bound to vanish.'"<sup>3</sup>

In one of his poems, the late scholar, Ḥājj Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Gharavī Iṣfahānī, well-known as Kumpānī, thus presents a depiction of the noble Imam (AS):

Every heart entertains the passionate love for approaching your domicile,

Passionate hearts entertain no passionate desire but to see your countenance.

There is no saddened heart not plainly

The target of the bow of your eyebrows.

There is no heart that is not broiled by the flame of your sorrow,

Nor any heart whose thirst is quenched by the rubies of your beautiful lips.

Knowing hearts may not flee from your noose,

The trap of this chain is but the locks of your hair.

The copy of the book of your beauty is evident,

If there be enigmas, that will be your hair.

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 91, l. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 11, under tradition 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Dalā'il al-Imāma*, p. 500, tradition 94.

The luminous moon is the servant of that resplendent forehead,  
 The eye of heaven is but attracted to your beauty.  
 Khidr has been wandering about your domicile for long,  
 Elixir is but a drop of your spring.  
 There is no city unperturbed by your affection,  
 There is no gathering free from passionate love for you.  
 O *Muṣṭaqir*! It seems to be a ball below your polo stick,  
 The world with all its greatness, it is but your small ball.

## 5. Resemblance of the Noble Imam (AS) to Prophets (AS)

- a. In the Tradition of the Tablet (*ḥadīth lawḥ*) God Almighty says: "Then, I complete imamate by Imam 'Askari's (AS) son who is a mercy on the world, possessing prophet Moses' (AS) perfection, prophet Jesus' (AS) splendor and magnanimity, and prophet Job's (AS) fortitude."<sup>2</sup>
- b. Imam Sajjād, his Eminence Zayn al-Ābidīn (AS), said: "In our riser lies some prophetic nobilities, those of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Job (AS), and Muḥammad (SAW); that of Adam and Noah (AS) is longevity, those of Abraham (AS) concealment of birth and reclusiveness, those of Moses (AS) fear and concealment from the public, that of Jesus (AS) different opinions of people about him, that of Job (AS) salvation from afflictions, that of Muḥammad (SAW), rising with a sword."<sup>3</sup>
- c. Imam Bāqir (AS) is narrated as saying: "Four prophetic nobilities lie in the Lord of the Command: those of Moses, Jesus, Joseph (AS), and Muḥammad (SAW); those of Moses (AS) fear and concern, that of Joseph (AS) confinement, that of Jesus (AS) different views on his death and life, that of the noble Prophet (SAW) rising with a sword."<sup>4</sup>
- d. Imam Ṣādiq said: "There is a nobility of Moses (AS) son

<sup>1</sup> Literally 'Needy', *nom de plume* of the poet.

<sup>2</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 143, tradition 59.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 217, tradition 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 216, tradition 3.



of 'Imrān in our riser. The narrator, 'Abd Allah ibn Sinān inquired about the nobility of Moses (AS) son of 'Imrān in the rising Imam (AS). Imam (AS) replied: "Concealment of birth and also his concealment from his people."<sup>1</sup>

- e. It is also narrated that certain prophetic nobilities lie in the Lord of the Command; those of Moses son of 'Imrān, Jesus, Joseph (AS), and Muḥammad (SAW), those of Moses (AS) is his fear and concern,<sup>2</sup> that from Jesus (AS) is that people disagree on his life and death, that of Joseph (AS) is his concealment from people, God Almighty draws a veil between him and people so that they see him, though they fail to recognize him; that of prophet Muḥammad (SAW) is that he lays the banner of guidance on his shoulder and follows his footsteps and acts upon his practice."<sup>3</sup>
- f. There is another tradition according to which God Almighty shall cause three events occurred to some prophets to happen to our riser: the manner of his birth resembles that of Prophet Moses (AS); his concealment from the public like Jesus (AS); his prolonged concealment like that of Prophet Noah (AS).<sup>4</sup>

## 6. Some Attributes of His Eminence

- a. Concerning the attributes of His Eminence, the Messenger of God (SAW) is reported as saying, "He resembles me more than anyone else in his appearance, speech, and conduct."<sup>5</sup> Similar to his grandfather, the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 216, tradition 2.

<sup>2</sup> Regarding him, it is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an (28:21): "Therefore, thence he fled, looking about in a state of fear." In a prayer recited upon pilgrimage to Āl Yāsīn, the Imam of the Age (AS) is mentioned by the title *al-murtuqib al-khā'if* ("Looking around in a state of fear").

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 223, tradition 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 219, tradition 9.

<sup>5</sup> In one of his sermons, the Commander of the Faithful made mention of His Eminence Imam Mahdī (AS), saying, "He resembles the Messenger of God in terms of appearance and conduct," see *'Awālim*, vol. 26/1, p. 194, tradition 220; *Kamāl al-Dīn*, p. 257.

Seal of the Prophets (SAW), he is a mercy on the world. Concerning the Noble Prophet (SAW), a blessed Qur'anic verse (21:107) reads, "We have sent you not but as a mercy on the world." Regarding the Seal of the Trustees, His Eminence Imam Mahdī (AS) the Divine Tradition of Tablet says, "I shall perfect imamate through Imam 'Askarī's (AS) son; he is a mercy on the world."<sup>1</sup>

Similar to his grandfather, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Alī (AS), who said, "He supports people in all vicissitudes,"<sup>2</sup> he is more concerned about us and pities our hopelessness. One of the blessed titles of the Imam of the Age is "Succor" (*ghawth*), as he is the deliverer of the miserable and the hopeless.

- b. Addressing Abū al-Wafā' Shīrāzī, the Messenger of God (SAW) said, "When you reached the end of your tether, invoke the Imam of the Age so that he may render you succor."<sup>3</sup>
- c. His Eminence is also reported as saying, "Your Lord's Mercy is all-embracing and I am the Divine Boundless Mercy."<sup>4</sup>
- d. Enumerating the attributes of that Divine Treasure, Imam 'Alī said, "He is the best haven for you. He excels you in knowledge and bestowing favors on his relatives."<sup>5</sup> He is the haven for the hopeless and whoever turns to him for support will be secure from hardships.
- e. Enumerating his own attributes, His Eminence said, "I am the Seal of the Trustees and it is through me that God removes hardships from my household and my followers."<sup>6</sup> It is a pity that his true value is unknown and he is regarded as a stranger.
- f. Concerning His Eminence, the Commander of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 143, tradition 59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 33, p. 474, vol. 40, p. 341.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 94, p. 35, vol. 102, p. 250.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 53, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 115.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 30.

Faithful said, "The Lord of this affair [namely His Eminence Imam Mahdī (AS)] is abandoned, lonely, stranger, and unaided."<sup>1</sup>

- g. His Eminence, the Lord of Martyrs, was asked whether he was the Lord of this affair. He replied, "No, I am not, but the Lord of this affair is one who is abandoned and forsaken without having avenged his noble father's martyrdom."<sup>2</sup>
- h. His Eminence Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far said, "He is abandoned, lonely, stranger, absent from his family, and his noble father's martyrdom has not been avenged."<sup>3</sup>
- i. At the outset of his arrival, the Imam of the Age (AS) will talk of his having been wronged, saying, "I am closer to the Messenger of God (SAW) than you in terms of relationship. I ask you to render us support and defend us against those who have wronged us, since we have been threatened, wronged, driven out of our homes, and our rights have been trampled underfoot."<sup>4</sup>

Similar to other pure Imams, Imam Mahdī (AS) possesses all exalted nobilities. He is the best manifestation of divine beauty and glory reflecting all divine attributes. He is heir to all the nobilities of the prophets and divinely appointed guardians and one may say: "What all the good possess is possessed by thee."

Enumerating the attributes of the Lord of the Age, Imam Riḍā is reported as saying, "Imam Mahdī (AS) is the most knowledgeable, the most patient, the most pious, the most generous, the most v'Aliant, and the most God fearing of all."<sup>5</sup>

- j. In his brilliant sermon delivered on the day of Ghadīr, the Messenger of God (SAW) not only discussed 'Alī (AS) imamate and succession, but also he clarified the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 131, tradition 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 151, tradition 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ghaybat Nu'mānī*, p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> *'Awālim*, vol. 1, p. 538, tradition 147.

political stances of Islam until the Day of Resurrection and also the most fundamental question in Islamic social system, namely the leadership of Muslim community (*umma*), particularly the imamate of his last trustee who will lead to the victory of Islamic faith over all religions. Addressing the audience, though in fact he was addressing humanity in all eras, he stated:

“O people! I am the prophet and ‘Alī (AS) is my successor. Behold! The last leader and guide of the Muslim community will rise from our house and he will be the Rising Imam Mahdī (AS).

Behold! He will be triumphant over all religions.

Behold! He will take revenge on tyrants.

Behold! He will conquer all the military strongholds of the enemy and he will destroy them.

Behold! He will cause the perdition of all disbelievers.

Behold! He will seek the vengeance of the blood of God’s friends.

Behold! He will render aid to God’s religion.

Behold! He will quench his thirst of the deep sea of truth and intuitive knowledge.

Behold! He will grant the virtuous the token of nobility and will provide the ignorant the token of ignorance.

Behold! He will talk on behalf on his Lord and will impart divine laws.

Behold! He will be an heir to all sciences and will be well-versed in them.

Behold! He will guide you to the path of perfection and he will possess fortitude in administration of affairs.

Behold! He will be vested with the administration of people’s affairs.

Behold! He will be the one the glad tidings of his arrival were borne by the prophets.

Behold! He will be Remainder Argument of God to be succeeded by no one. There shall be no right unless he will possess it and there shall be no light unless he will possess it.

Behold! He shall not be conquered by any power and no one shall be able to overcome him.

Behold! He will be the divinely appointed guardian and arbiter in the earth and His trustee in esoteric and exoteric matters.”<sup>1</sup>

## 7. His Signs and Tokens

- a. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Aṭā is reported as saying, “I joined the holy audience of Imam Bāqir (AS) and inquired: ‘You have large number of followers in Iraq and you are unequalled in the Prophet’s (SAW) house.’ He replied, ‘O ‘Abd Allah! Do not entertain the ideas of the lowly! By God! I am not your Lord.’ I asked, ‘Who is our lord, then?’ He answered, ‘Behold! The one whose birth is concealed from people is your Lord.’”<sup>2</sup>
- b. Rayyān ibn Šila said, “I asked Imam Riḍā (AS), ‘Are you the Lord of the Command?’ He replied, ‘Aye, I am the Lord of the Command, but not that Lord of the Command who will administer justice throughout the world when it will be brimming over with injustice. How could I be that Lord with such physical weakness? The Rising Imam will be one who upon his arrival will be advanced in years, though he will appear as a young man. He will be so robust that he will be able to eradicate a tree and if he shouts on mountains, rocks will shatter and collapse ...’”<sup>3</sup>
- c. Imam Muṣṭabā is reported as saying, “The ninth descendant of my brother, Imam Ḥusayn (AS), the son of the mistress of the maids, will live a long life, by divine will, and he will appear, by His Grace, as a young man below forty years of age so that Divine Omnipotence

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<sup>1</sup> *Ihtijāj*, vol. 1, p. 84; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 37, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> According to another tradition, he is reported as saying, “Behold! The one whose birth is unknown to people is your Lord.” *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 36, tradition 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 322, tradition 30.

will be manifested.”<sup>1</sup>

- d. Ḥakam ibn Abī Nu‘aym said, “I joined the holy audience of Imam Bāqir (AS) in Medina and inquired, ‘I made a vow between Rukn and Muqām that upon visiting you in Medina I do not leave the city unless I be apprised whether you are the riser of the House of Muḥammad (SAW)? Are you the one who will slay the enemies of God, bestow honor upon the friends of God, and will make manifest the religion of God?’ He replied, “O Ḥakam! How could I be him? I am 45 years of age, but the Lord of the Command will be closer than me to childhood and he will be more agile than me on mount.”<sup>2</sup>
- e. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, “Following the emergence of Muḥammad, ‘Alī, and Ḥasan, the fourth one among them shall be the riser.”<sup>3</sup>
- f. Imam Riḍā (AS) said, “The signs and tokens of His Eminence will include his agelessness.”<sup>4</sup>
- g. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) stated, “My father wore the armor of the Messenger of God (SAW), but it he dragged it. I did likewise; but that armor will be befitting on him, in the manner that it was befitting to the Prophet (SAW).”<sup>5</sup> Traditions reflect that the Messenger of God (SAW) had two armors; one of the two regarded as a token of imamate and one of its qu’Alities is that it only befits the imam of the age; the other was an armor that was too long for the noble Imams and after the sad demise of the Messenger of God (SAW), it only befits the graceful stature of the last divine treasure, the promised Imam Mahdī (AS).
- h. Imam Bāqir (AS) said, “The Command [namely, imamate and rising] will be vested with the most unknown and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 132, tradition 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 140, tradition 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 143, tradition 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 285.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 315, tradition 20.

the youngest among us.”<sup>1</sup>

- i. Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs said, “The sign of Mahdī (AS) is that he will be quite strict with agents and most generous about property, and kind and merciful to the indigent.”<sup>2</sup>

## 8. Miracles, a Way of Acquaintance with the Imam (AS)

The events of the promised Imam’s (AS) life antedating the sad demise of Imam ‘Askarī (AS) include the miracles wrought by him.

### 8. 1. The Imam’s (AS) Speech upon Birth

Similar to Jesus (AS), Imam Mahdī (AS) spoke upon birth and in his cradle, even before his birth.

- a. Lady Ḥakīma Khātūn, having witnessed the birth of the Noble Imam (AS), in treating of the manner of his birth said, “I was reading *Sūrat al-Qadr* (97) before his birth on the orders of Imam ‘Askarī (AS), noticing that he accompanied me in reciting the Qur’anic Chapter. I saw that he prostrated himself upon his birth and when he returned to his sitting position, he pronounced the formula of the Islamic faith [namely, there is no god but Allah and Muḥammad (SAW) is His Messenger] and proceeded to enumerate the Infallible Imams (AS) in order and when he reached his own name, he said, ‘O God! Fulfill Your promise, bring my matters to completion, make my steps firm, and make the earth brim over with justice and Equality through me.’<sup>3</sup>
- b. Nasīm, Imam ‘Askarī’s (AS) servant, said, “I joined the blessed Imam’s audience an evening after the birth of the Imam of the Age (AS) and when I sneezed in the latter’s presence, he said, ‘May God bless you.’ Then, he inquired, ‘Would you like to be given glad tidings of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 42, tradition 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Fitan Na’īm*, p. 321.

<sup>3</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 11, tradition 14.

sneezing?' I replied, 'Aye, O master!' He said, 'Sneezing safeguards your lifespan for three days.'<sup>1</sup>

- c. Abū Naṣr, the servant, said, "I joined the audience of the Lord of the Time (AS) when he was in his cradle. He said to me, 'Fetch the red sandals!' I did likewise. He asked, 'Do you know me?' I replied, 'Aye, you are my master and my master's son.' He said, 'I did not inquire about this.' I replied, 'Please let me know of your question.' He said, 'I am the last trustee of the Prophet (SAW) and it will be because of me that God will remove afflictions from my family and followers.'<sup>2</sup>

## 8. 2. Imparting Secrets

Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad said, "I was so afraid when 'Amr ibn 'Awf, the then governor, decided to execute me. I bid farewell to my family and relatives and went towards Imam 'Askarī's (AS) house to bid farewell to him. When I entered his home, I saw a child seated beside the noble Imam. The child's face was perplexingly luminous such that I almost forgot what I had in mind. He turned towards me, saying, 'O Ibrāhīm! Do not run away! God will rid you of his evil.' I was further perplexed by his speech. I asked Imam 'Askarī, 'May I be your sacrifice! Who is this child who imparted the secrets which I entertained in my heart?' He replied, 'He is my son who will succeed me.'<sup>3</sup>

## 8. 3. Providing Replies to Scholarly Questions

- a. Kāmil ibn Ibrāhīm said, "I joined the audience of Imam 'Askarī (AS) to ask him some questions. I seated myself beside a door on which a curtain was flying in the wind. I saw a four year old child whose face was brilliant as the full moon. Upon seeing me, he called me by my name, saying, 'O Kāmil ibn Ibrāhīm!' I replied unconsciously, 'Greetings to you, my master.' He inquired, 'Have you

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. vol. 51, p. 5, tradition 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 30, tradition 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ithbāt Dār al-Haqqā*, tradition 12; *Ithbāt al-Hudāh*, vol. 3, p. 700, tradition 136.



come here to ask the Imam whether those who do not hold your beliefs will be admitted to Paradise?' I replied, 'Aye, by God! I've come here to ask the same.' He said, 'In this case, the inhabitants of Paradise will be few in number. Only those who love the Commander of the Faithful, (AS) and swear by his right to c'Aliphate, though they have failed to truly perceive his right and his exalted position will be admitted to Paradise with the appellation of 'followers of truth' (*haqqiya*). You have also come here to ask about the beliefs maintained by those who believe in delegation of divine powers to the Shi'i Imams (*mufawwidda*, lit. "delegators"). By God! They lie. Our hearts is the vessel of Divine Will. Whenever He Wills to do something, we will likewise, as told by God Almighty: 'They do not will anything unless God Wills it.'<sup>1</sup> Then, Imam 'Askarī (AS) said to me: "What else do you expect to hear? Your questions have been addressed."<sup>2</sup>

- b. Accompanied with Aḥmad ibn Ishāq, Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allah Qummī joined the audience of the noble Imam Hasan 'Askarī (AS) to ask some scholarly questions. For the sake of brevity, mention will be made below of some of the questions. Sa'd says, "We I was about to ask my questions, Imam (AS), pointing to his son, said, 'Ask the light of my eyes [namely, my beloved son]. Then, the beloved child turned to me, saying, 'Ask me whatever you want.' I inquired, 'What is meant by K. H. Y. 'A. Ş?' He replied, 'These letters are of the unseen. God Almighty informed his servant, Zakariyā of them and then He imparted them to Prophet Muḥammad (SAW). The story is that Zakariyā asked his Lord to teach him

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<sup>1</sup> Imam Hādī (AS) said, "Verily, God Almighty has made the hearts of the Infallible Imams (AS) the repository of His Will; Thus, whenever God Wills something, they also will the same and it is God's words that they do not will what God does not Will. See *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 25, p. 372, tradition 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Kamāl al-Din*, p. 499.

the blessed name of five people. Gabriel descended onto the earth and taught them to him. Whenever Zakariyā was sorrowful, he uttered the blessed names of the Noble Prophet (SAW), the Commander of the Faithful, Faṭīma, and Ḥasan (AS) to remove his sorrow, but when he uttered the name of Ḥusayn (AS), he became so distressed that there was a lump in his throat.

Once he talked of his state at the Threshold of God Almighty, saying, 'O God! How is it that uttering the names of those four people liberates me from sorrow and gives me peace of mind, but uttering the fifth name makes me cry and I feel deep sorrow?' God Almighty revealed to him the secret and informed him of the account of Imam Ḥusayn (AS), saying, *K. H. Y. 'A. Ṣ* stands for Karbalā' (*K*); fall of his house (*ḥalāka* "destruction," *H*); Yazīd (*Y*), a tyrant who will wrong Imam Ḥusayn (AS); thirst of the Imam (*'aṭash* "thirst," *'A*); fortitude of Imam Ḥusayn (AS; *ṣabr* "fortitude," *Ṣ*). ...

I inquired, 'Why people have been impeded from electing an Imam for themselves?' He replied, 'Which Imam (leader)? Pious or corrupt?' I said, 'The pious one, qu'Alified for improving the states of the society and people.' He stated, 'Nobody is aware of other people's secret intentions so that one may not truly make a distinction between the pious and the corrupt. Do you assume that corrupt people would be elected instead of the pious?' I replied, 'It may be so.' He said, 'That is why people are not entitled to elect their Imams. ...'

The Shi'ī perspective on imamate (leadership) is that similar to prophethood, it is a divine appointment. An Imam must possess all the required qu'Alities, e. g. infallibility and immunity from errors, mistakes, and oblivion. Distinction of such qu'Alities is beyond popular discretion, since only God, the Creator of man is All-Aware of all secret intentions to appoint the Imam and impart the appointment through His Messenger (SAW). The Holy Qur'anic Verses revealed in this vein include the following:

"Your Lord creates whatever He wills and chooses. No choice they have. Glorified is Allah and exalted above all that

they associate as partners with Him.” (28:68)

“It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. Whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has verily strayed into a plain error.” (33:36)

Having been called by the Noble Prophet (SAW) to embrace Islam, the chief of the tribe of Banū ‘Āmir said that he would accept the call if he would make him succeed him as the leader of Muslims. The Messenger of God (SAW) said, “Leadership of Muslims is a divine appointment vested with whoever He wills.”<sup>1</sup>

#### 8. 4. Distinction between Lawful and Unlawful.

Aḥmad ibn Ishāq, Imam ‘Askarī’s (AS) agent, said, “I took some pieces of property of the Shi’is to present to Imam ‘Askarī (AS), including a bag with 160 bags of gold and silver coins each bag bearing the seal of its owner. I placed the bag before the noble Imam (AS). Looking at his small child with a luminous countenance like the full man, Imam (AS) said, ‘My child! Open the gifts of your friends and followers!’ The beloved child said, “O my master! Would it be befitting that I make solid my pure hands by touching these impure gifts in which lawful and unlawful are intermingled?”

Imam (AS) turned towards Aḥmad ibn Ishāq, saying, “O son of Ishāq! Take out what is in the bag so that my child may separate the lawful from the unlawful.’ Aḥmad ibn Ishāq reports that upon taking out the first bag, the beloved child said, “This bag belongs to so and son, son of son and so from such and such quarter of the city (enumerating the names of him, his father, and the neighborhood). There are 62 silver coins in it, 45 of which are the price of a land lot whose owner inherited it from his father and 14 coins are the price of nine rolls of cloth and three gold coins are the rentals of shops.’

Imam ‘Askarī (AS) said, ‘Quite so, my son! Now inform this man of the unlawful ones.’ The beloved child carefully

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<sup>1</sup> *Vilāyat va Rahbarī az Didgāh-i ‘Ilm va Dīn*, vol. 3, p. 72, quoting Ṭabarī’s *Ta’rikh*, vol. 2, p. 84.

separated all unlawful coins, enumerating the reasons for their unlawfulness. Aḥmad ibn Ishāq opened the bag and found a letter in it on which the name of the owner of the bag and the quantity of the coins were recorded, precisely in the manner mentioned by the beloved child. Then He took out another bag and placed it before the child and the beloved child, after making mention of the name and whereabouts of the owner, said, 'There are fifty silver coins in this bag touching which is unlawful to us.'

Inquired by Aḥmad ibn Ishāq about the reason, he said, 'Since it is the price of the wheat whose owner wronged farmers at the time of harvest, filling his bushels, but leaving their bushels half empty.' Imam 'Askarī (AS) said, 'Quite so, my son!' Turning towards Aḥmad ibn Ishāq, he said, "O Aḥmad ibn Ishāq! Gather these coins and return them or have them returned to their owners, since we are not in need of them."<sup>1</sup>

#### 8. 5. Beside His Father's Dead Body

Abū al-Adyān was Imam 'Askarī's (AS) messenger, carrying Imam's (AS) letters to Shi'is. He said, "In my last meeting with the noble Imam (AS), he put at my disposal some letters, saying: 'Take them to the city of Madā'in. You will return to Sāmarrā' after 15 days and you will hear people mourning at my home and you will see my dead body at the place of funeral ablution.' I inquired, 'In that case, who will succeed you?' He replied, 'Whoever asks you to hand in the replies to my letters.' I asked, 'Will there be another sign to know him?' He said, 'The one who will lead the funeral prayers for me.' I further inquired, 'Will there be another sign?' He replied, 'The one who informs you of the contents of the bag.' Abū al-Adyān reports that he took the letters to Madā'in and obtained the replies to them and in the same manner that Imam 'Askarī (AS) had said, he returned to Samārrā' after a fortnight to hear mourning at the noble Imam's (AS) home and to see his pure dead body at the place of funeral ablution.

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 78, tradition 1.

Ja'far, Imam 'Askarī's (AS) brother was standing at the door and some Shī'īs condoled him on loss and congratulated him on his imamate. I did likewise upon entering the Imam's home, but he did not ask me any questions nor did he ask me to provide him with the replies to the letters. After a while, the Imam's servant, 'Aqīd, came out and said to Ja'far, "The blessed body of Imam has been washed and wrapped in a shroud and taken to the prayer place. Arise and lead the funeral prayer for him."

Abū al-Adyān said, "Accompanying Ja'far and some Shī'īs I entered the house and saw Imam's dead body wrapped in a shroud placed in a coffin. Ja'far proceeded to lead the funeral prayer, but when he intended to start, a five year old child, handsome as full moon, appeared. He was of white complexion and curled hair. He went to the dead body and thus addressed Ja'far: 'O uncle! Step back as I am more worthy to lead the funeral prayer for my father. Shocked and turned pale, Ja'far stepped aside and the child led the funeral prayer. Then, he turned to me, saying: 'Hand in the replies to the letters.' I did likewise, saying to myself, 'They were two signs mentioned by Imam 'Askarī (AS), but that of the bag is still standing.'

In the meanwhile, a caravan from Qum arrived at Sāmarrā', inquiring about Imam 'Askarī (AS) and upon being apprised of his martyrdom, they inquired about his successor. Some pointed at Ja'far and mention his name. They came to Ja'far, saying: 'We carry letters and pieces of property. Tell us about the senders and the quantity of the possessions.' Displeased, Ja'far arose, saying, 'Do you expect me to know the unseen?' a servant came out of the interior quarters of the house, saying: 'The letters of so and so and also a bag are with you, the latter containing 1,000, the impressions of ten of which have been effaced.' He was given the letters and the gifts saying to him that they were sent for the Imam and all the signs mentioned by Imam 'Askarī (AS) were reflected in him."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Kamāl al-Dīn*, vol. 2, p. 223, tradition 25, chapter 43.

## 8. 6. Floating on Water

Upon the martyrdom of Imam 'Askarī (AS), the 'Abbāsīd C'Alīph Mu'tamad sent three of his mercenaries to search Imam's (AS) home and to behead whoever they found there and take the heads to him. They entered Imam's (AS) home, but off a sudden they saw a cellar in which somebody was establishing his prayer on a straw mattress afloat on water, paying no attention to them.

One of them, Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allah by name, went into the water to reach him, but He was almost drowned when his friends saved him. Another mercenary tried to reach Imam, but he had the same fate. Noticing their failure, they fled to Mu'taḍid to report the incident and the latter ordered them to keep it as a secret.<sup>1</sup>

## 8. 7. Reve'Alīng the Possessions

Following Imam 'Askarī's (AS) martyrdom, a group of people from Qum and its neighboring regions went to meet with Imam (AS) and as usual carried some gifts uninformed of Imam's (AS) demise. Upon their arrival at Sāmarrā', they were informed of Imam's (AS) demise. Inquiring about Imam's (AS) successor, they were told that Ja'far had succeeded him. They met with Ja'far, but they did not find the signs of Imam in him; so, they did not hand in the gifts and intended to return.

Having passed through the gates of the city, they noticed that they were called by their names. They stopped to meet the caller who said to them: "You've been summoned by your master. They immediately followed him and entered the home of their master, Imam 'Askarī (AS). They saw that the late Imam's (AS) son, the Divine Argument, had seated himself on a couch, wearing a green garment with a blessed face luminous like the moon. They saluted him and the latter replied in kindness, saying: 'The quantity of the possessions which you carry is such and such number of gold coins. So and so sent

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<sup>1</sup> *al-Qatra*, vol. 2, p. 502, tradition 1165, quoting *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaḳīm*, vol. 2, p. 210, tradition 5.

such and such amount.' He enumerated the names and particulars of the possessions. We praised God for being granted such grace and prostrated ourselves before the blessed Imam (AS). We asked him the questions we had in mind and received replies to them. Before bidding him farewell, we presented to the noble Imam the gifts sent by people."<sup>1</sup>

## 9. The Ways of Recognizing the Imam (AS)

### 9. 1. Designation of the Former Imam

- a. Abū Baṣīr said, "One day, I was in the presence of Imam Kāzīm (AS), inquiring the noble Imam (AS) about the signs of recognizing him. The noble Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (AS) suggested some of these signs, one of them was that the preceding Imam had made mention or explicitly designated his imamate."<sup>2</sup>
- b. Sulaymān ibn Mihrān, reporting on the authority of Imam Ṣādiq (AS), said, "Imam possesses ten qu'Alities one of which is that he must be explicitly mentioned as Imam." Since infallibility is one of the qu'Alifications of imamate in Shī'ism and it is not apparent, but it is an inward qu'Ality and privilege, a divine power and bounty, so people may not recognize and elect him and it is simply God who appoints the Imam and designates him through the Prophet. Therefore, Imam may be recognized by the designation of the Messenger of God (SAW) or the preceding imam must have explicitly introduced him as the Imam.

The Imam of the Age (AS) has been designated not only by his preceding Imam but all the Imams, the noble Messenger of God, the Holy Qur'an, and other divinely revealed Scriptures bore the glad tidings of his arrival. A survey of all such attestations will be quite voluminous and for the sake of brevity, mention will be made of some Qur'anic verses and a

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 47, tradition 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Rawḍat al-Wā'izīn*, vol. 1, p. 213.

number of traditions narrated from the Infallibles.

## 9. 2. Imam of the Age (AS) from the Perspective of the Qur'an

Since the Holy Qur'an has made mention of all matters, we find many a verse alluding to the Imam, the Remainder of God, may our souls be his sacrifice.

In his invaluable work, the erudite scholar Majlisī included 65 Qur'anic verses that, based on the traditions narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt, treat of the Divine Argument, his arrival, and uprising, some of which will be mentioned below.

- a. Verse 105 of *Sūrat al-Anbiyā'* (21) reads, "Verily, We have written in the revealed Scriptures, after Remembrance [namely, the Torah] that My worthy servants shall inherit the land."

Concerning the exegesis of the blessed verse, Imam Bāqir (AS) said, "Imam Mahdī (AS) and his followers are intended by 'the worthy servants.'"<sup>1</sup>

- b. Verse 5 of *Sūrat al-Qiṣaṣ* (28) reads, "We willed to do a favor to the oppressed of the earth and We made them the leaders and heirs of the earth."

Regarding the exegesis of the blessed verse, Imam 'Alī Amīr al-Mu'minīn (AS), the Commander of the Faithful, said, "Muḥammad's (SAW) House is intended by the oppressed in the blessed verse and He will make them attain to the zenith of glory and humiliates their enemies."<sup>2</sup>

- c. Verse 9 of *Sūrat al-Ṣaff* (61) reads, "He is the Lord who sent His Messenger with guidance and the true religion to make it victorious over all religions, even though the polytheists be displeased with it."

Regarding the exegesis of the blessed verse, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said: "By God! The interpretation of this verse is not realized yet." Abū Baṣīr asked, "May I be your sacrifice! When will it realize?" He replied, "When our riser, namely Imam Mahdī (AS) rises."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 47; *Ta'wīl al-Āyāt*, vol. 1, p. 332, tradition 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 54, tradition 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 60, tradition 58.



- d. Verse 83 of *Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān* (3) reads, “Do they seek other than the religion of Allah, while to Him submitted all creatures in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly and to Him and embraced Islam.”

Concerning the exegesis of the blessed verse, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said: “Upon the riser’s arrival, there shall be no land unless the call to monotheism be heard from it, bearing witness to the Noble Prophet Muḥammad’s (SAW) mission.”<sup>1</sup>

- e. Verse 39 of *Sūrat al-Anfāl* (8) reads, “Fight them until there is no more polytheism and the religion will all be for Allah.”

Imam Bāqir (AS) said, “The time is not ripe yet for the interpretation of the blessed verse. ...<sup>2</sup> The right time shall be when our riser, may our souls be his sacrifice, rises.

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, “Whoever be contemporaneous with the rise of our riser, may our souls be his sacrifice, will perceive the interpretation of the verse. On that day, the religion of the Noble Prophet Muḥammad (SAW), namely Islam, will penetrate all points of darkness of night and there shall remain no polytheism in the earth.”<sup>3</sup>

### 9. 3. Imam of the Age (AS) from the Perspective of Traditions

#### ●The Traditions of the Prophet’s (SAW) Ascension

- a. The Messenger of God (SAW) is reported as saying, “When I was transported to the seventh heaven ... my Lord called me, saying: ‘I will make My land prosper through your riser by glorification of Me and I will purge the earth through him of the filth of My enemies and I will appoint My friends the heirs of the earth.’”<sup>4</sup>
- b. According to another Prophetic tradition, “My Lord revealed unto me: ‘O Muḥammad! I created you, ‘Alī,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 340, tradition 89.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 378, tradition 181.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 55, tradition 41.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 66, tradition 3.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 55, tradition 41.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 66, tradition 3.

Faṭīma, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and the Imams out of one light. ... O Muḥammad! Do you wish to see them?' I said, 'Aye.' Then, I saw them all with Divine Argument among them luminous like a brilliant star, regarding whom He said: 'He will render lawful what is lawful to Me and will render unlawful what is unlawful to Me. Love him, since I love him and his friends.'<sup>1</sup>

- c. Based on another Prophetic tradition, "My Lord revealed unto me: 'O Muḥammad! Do you wish to see them?' I said, 'Aye.' He said, 'Look up!' I looked upwards and saw their light. I saw Ḥujjat ibn al-Ḥasan standing among them, brilliant like a shining star, regarding him He said: 'He will render lawful what is lawful to Me and he will make unlawful what is lawful to me. I will take My revenge on My enemies through him. He will by the soul of My friends and their source of serenity. He will cure the hearts of the Shī'is through taking vengeance on oppressors. He will exhume the two idols of the Quraysh and will set them ablaze.'"<sup>2</sup>

## ● The Tradition of the Tablet

The Tablet Tradition, found by Jābir at the blessed hands of the exalted saintly lady, Fāṭīma (SA), included the sacred names of the pure imams together with their attributes. Regarding the Divine Argument, may our souls be his sacrifice, it is written: "Then, I will perfect imamate through Imam 'Askarī's (AS) son who is a mercy bestowed on the world."<sup>3</sup>

## ● The Prophetic Traditions

- a. The Messenger of God (SAW) is reported as saying, "One who denies the Riser, from among my descendants has in fact denied me."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 36, p. 222, tradition 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 36, p. 245, tradition 58.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 36, p. 245, tradition 58.

<sup>4</sup> According to Sunnī traditions, "One who denies Mahdī is an unbeliever

- b. Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī said, "I heard from the Messenger of God, saying: 'Twelve Imams will succeed me, nine of who will be descendants of Imam Ḥusayn (AS) and the ninth of whom will be their Riser."<sup>1</sup>
- c. The Messenger of God said to Imam Ḥusayn (AS), "O Ḥusayn! Five Imams will be born out of your loins, one of whom will the Mahdī (lit. truly guided) of tis community. When your father, the Commander of the Faithful, Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī, falls a martyr, Imam Ḥasan (AS) will succeed him as the Imam and when he is poisoned, you will be the Imam. ... When Imam Hādī passes away, his son, Imam Ḥasan will succeed him as the Imam. Then Divine Argument (Ḥujja) will be the Imam and he will administer justice throughout the world after it brims over with injustice."<sup>2</sup>
- d. The Messenger of God (SAW), bedridden with ailment, said unto the exalted saintly lady, Fāṭima (SA), "By God in Whose Hands my soul rests! There will be a guide for this community. By God! He will be one of your descendants."<sup>3</sup>
- e. It is also reported from the Messenger of God (SAW), "My trustees and successors and Divine Arguments on people after me will be twelve people, the first of whom will be my brother and the last one will be my descendant." He was asked, "O Messenger of God! Who is brother?" He replied, "'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib." He was asked, "Who will be your descendant?" He said: "He will be Mahdī (AS) who will administer justice throughout the world after having been brimming over with injustice."<sup>4</sup>

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(*Iqd al-Durar*, p. 157). Based on another Sunnī tradition, "One who denies Mahdī's (AS) Rising is an unbeliever (*Furā'id al-Simṭayn*, vol. 2, p. 334). *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 73, tradition 21.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 36, p. 292, tradition 118.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 36, p. 307, tradition 145.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 67, tradition 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 71, tradition 12.

## ● The Traditions of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS)

- a. Aṣḡagh ibn Nubāta said, "I joined the audience of Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS), finding him deep in thought, tapping his fingers on the ground. I asked, "O Commander of the Faithful! (Yā Amīr al-Mu'minīn) What has happened? I see that you are deep in thought pointing at the ground. Are you inclined towards it?" He replied, "By God, Nay! I have not been inclined towards this dust and the world for one single day, but I was thinking about a descendant of mine, the eleventh descendant of mine in succession bearing the name of Mahdī. He will administer justice throughout the world after having been brimming over with injustice. His occultation will entail perplexity for some people in which some err and some will be guided."<sup>1</sup>
- b. Abū Ishāq said, "Taking a glance at his son, Imam Ḥusayn (AS), the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS) said, "Verily, this son of mine is the lord of the people, in the same manner that the Messenger of God (SAW) is his namesake and bears a striking resemblance to him. He will administer justice throughout the world."<sup>2</sup>

## ● The Traditions of Imam Muḡtabā (AS)

Abū Sa'īd 'Aqīṣā thus reports a tradition on the authority of the noble Imam (AS), "There is none of us who has no pledge of support for the tyrant of his times [namely we all have to live under discretionary concealment of our ideas under the rule of a tyrant for maintaining the religion of God and safeguarding his own life and those of his followers], except for the Riser that Jesus (AS) will descend from heaven to establish prayer behind him. Verily, God Almighty has concealed his birth and has veiled him behind the veil of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 117, tradition 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 116, tradition 15.

occultation so that upon his rise he would not have pledged allegiance to anyone.”<sup>1</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Ḥusayn (AS)

- a. Imam Ḥusayn (AS) is reported as saying, “There will be a tradition of Prophets Joseph (AS) and Moses (AS), son of ‘Imrān, in my ninth line of descendant and he will be the Riser of us *Ahl al-Bayt*.”<sup>2</sup>
- b. According to another tradition narrated from him, “There will be twelve Mahdī’s (lit. rightly guided one) in our descendants: the first of whom is the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (AS), and the last of them will be my son, nine degrees removed from me; the later will be the Imam who will rise in truth. God will give a new life to the earth through him and He will make the religion of truth triumphant over all other religions through him, even though polytheists be displeased with it.”<sup>3</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Sajjād (AS)

- a. It is reported by one of the children of the noble Imam, “My father always referred to my brother, Muḥammad, as Bāqir; for instance, he would say, ‘Call my son to [come to] me,’ ‘I told my son, Bāqir.’ Once I asked the noble Imam, ‘Dear father! Why is he called Bāqir?’ He replied, ‘Dear son! Indeed imamate lies in his descendants until the Rise of our Riser who will administer justice throughout the world.’ I inquired about the Imams to succeed him.’ He said, ‘They will be seven in number, among whom will be Mahdī (AS) who will establish religion in the last days of the world.”<sup>4</sup>
- b. Zuhārī said, “I asked Imam Sajjād, ‘Who will succeed you as our Imam?’ Pointing at his son, Imam Bāqir (AS), the noble Imam (AS) replied, “This son of mine, my trustee,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 132, tradition 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 51, p. 133, tradition 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 51, p. 133, tradition 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Kifāyat al-Athar*, p. 237.

heir, treasure of my knowledge, mine of fortitude, and splitter of knowledge. ...' I said, 'Why do you not vest your elder son with imamate?' He replied, 'Imamate is not a matter of age. Thus we have made an allegiance with the Messenger of God (SAW) and it is thus recorded in the Tablet. ... He proceeded to say, 'Seven Imams will be born from the loins of my son, Muḥammad one of whom will be Mahdī (AS)."<sup>1</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Bāqir (AS)

- a. Imam Bāqir (AS) said to Abū Ḥamza Thumālī, "O Abū Ḥamza! Certainities preordained by God include the Rise of our Riser and whoever entertains doubts as to what I am saying, he will meet God as an unbeliever." He proceeded to say, "May my parents be sacrifices to my name sake who also bears my kunya. <sup>2</sup> He will be my seventh son in the line of descent who will administer justice throughout the world when it will be brimming over with injustice."<sup>3</sup>
- b. Imam Bāqir (AS) said to 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Aṭā, 'Behold! He whose birth is concealed from people is your lord [viz. lord of the command]."<sup>4</sup>
- c. Abū Baṣīr states, 'My master, Imam Bāqir (AS), said, 'Nine people from our house will follow Imam Ḥusayn (AS), the ninth of who is the Riser and he will be superior to them.'<sup>5</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Ṣādiq (AS)

- a. Imam Ṣādiq said, "One who acknowledges the imamate

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> Patronymic name or title, beginning with Abū [father] and Umm [mother] followed by the name of the son or daughter.

<sup>3</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 139, tradition 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 138, tradition 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Qaṭra*, vol. 2, p. 810, tradition 1174.



of all imams except for that of Mahdī (AS) is like one acknowledging the prophethood of all Prophets (AS) but Muḥammad (SAW).” He was asked, “O son of God’s Messenger (SAW)! Which of your descendants will be Mahdī’s father?” He replied, “The fifth son of the Seven Imam’s (AS) son, one of whose characteristics is that he will be in occultation.”<sup>1</sup>

- b. Abū Baṣīr is reported as saying, “I asked him, ‘Who will be Riser from the *Ahl al-Bayt*?’ He replied, ‘He will be the fifth son of one of the descendants of my son, Mūsā (AS).”
- c. Khallād ibn Qaṣṣār said, “Imam Ṣādiq (AS) was inquired, ‘Has the Riser been born?’ Imam replied, ‘No, he has not been born yet, but if I happen to be his contemporary, I will be at his service all my life.’”<sup>2</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Kāẓim (AS)

- a. The noble Imam Mūsā ibn Ja’far (AS) is reported as saying, “My fifth son in the line of descent will be the Rising Imam who will efface the earth from the filth of God’s enemies and will administer justice throughout the world when it brims over with injustice. ...”<sup>3</sup>
- b. He is also reported as saying, “When the fifth son of the seventh Trustee goes into occultation, take God into account in terms of your religion and seek a safe haven in Him, unless you may be lead astray.”<sup>4</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Ridā (AS)

- a. Imam Ridā is reported as saying to Da’bal, “O Da’bal! My son, Muḥammad, will succeed me as Imam to be succeeded by his son, ‘Alī, his son, Ḥasan, then, his son, the Divine Argument, the Rising Imam (AS).”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 143, tradition 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 148, tradition 22.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 151, tradition 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 150, tradition 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 154, tradition 4.

- b. He is also reported as saying, "The fourth son of mine will be the son of the best of the maids. God will efface all wrongs through him."<sup>1</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Jawād (AS)

- a. Imam Jawād (AS) said, "My son, 'Alī will succeed me as Imam whose decree, speech, and obedience will be as those of mine. He will be succeeded by his son, Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī (AS), whose decree, speech, and obedience will be as those of his father." Then, Imam 'Askarī kept silent. The narrator asked, "Who will succeed Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī?" the Noble Imam burst into tears, saying, "Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī (AS) will be succeeded by the true, awaited Riser."<sup>2</sup>
- b. 'Abd al-'Azīm Ḥasanī said, "I joined the audience of Imam Jawād (AS), intending to inquire about Imam Mahdī (AS). Before raising my question, he replied, "O Abū al-Qāsim! Mahdī will be our Riser and it is incumbent upon us to await him during his occultation and obey him upon his Rise. He will be my third son."<sup>3</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Hādī (AS)

- a. Abū Hāshim Ja'farī said, "I heard Imam Hādī (AS) as saying, "My son, Imam Ḥasan (AS) will succeed me as Imam. My followers are obliged to follow him and his successor to Imamate."<sup>4</sup>
- b. He is also reported as saying, "My son, Imam Ḥasan (AS) will succeed me as Imam and he will be succeeded by his son, the Rising Imam who will administer justice throughout the world when it will be brimming over with injustice."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ithbāt al-Hudāh*, vol. 3, p. 478.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 157, tradition 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 156, tradition 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 158, tradition 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Kifāyat al-Athar*, p. 288.

## ● The Traditions of Imam ‘Askarī (AS)

- a. Imam ‘Askarī (AS) said, “It is as if I see you in discord regarding my successor. Behold that one who acknowledges all the Imams succeeding the Messenger of God, in turn, but denies my son, will be like one who acknowledges all the Messengers of God (AS) but the prophethood of the Messenger of God, Muḥammad (AS).”<sup>1</sup>
- b. He is also reported as saying, “My son will succeed me as Imam and Divine Argument and one who dies without acknowledging his imamate will be regarded as those who died in the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance.”<sup>2</sup>

## ● The Traditions Narrated by Others

All thinkers in the world acknowledge the need for a reformer to reform the affairs of the world and it would be incredible to the wise that the world continues with such unstable circumstances to the end, immersed in the mire of tyranny, injustice, and chaos. Belief in the emergence of a world savior and reformer is not particular to Muslims, but all the followers of monotheistic religions maintain the same and all divinely appointed prophets bore glad tidings of the arrival of a savior and reformer of the world to their followers. Such tidings are attested in Scriptures, e. g. the Psalms, the Torah, the Bible, and those of Hindus and Zoroastrians.

Such belief is not only shared by the Shī‘ī, but all Muslim denominations believe in Imam Mahdī (AS) and numerous Sunnī traditions attest to his arrival, such that some Sunnī scholars maintain that such traditions have been transmitted by successive narrators.

- a. In his *al-Taḥdhīb*, Ibn Ḥajar ‘Asqalānī writes, “Numerous transmitters have successively narrated Prophetic traditions regarding Mahdī.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 160, tradition 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Iḥbāt al-Hudāh*, vol. 3, p. 482, under tradition 189.

<sup>3</sup> vol. 9, p. 144.

- b. In his *Nūr al-Abṣār*, Shablanjī writes, "Successively transmitted Prophetic traditions reflect that he is from his *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) and he will fill the earth with justice."<sup>1</sup>
- c. Qurṭubī in his exegetical work, under the blessed Verse "To make it superior over all religions" (9:33; 61:9), "Sound traditions have been successively transmitted based on which Mahdī is from the family of the Messenger of God (SAW)."
- Sunnī Qur'anic exegetes have made references to the Qur'anic verses connected to the arrival of Imam Mahdī (AS). Similarly, Sunnī traditionists have also collected numerous traditions regarding Mahdī in their books. Shaykh Ḥurr 'Āmilī, in his *Ithbāt al-Hudā*, has devoted a chapter to such traditions, entitled "Collection of all the traditions narrated about Mahdī (AS) by Sunnī transmission authorities in their reliable sources." 'Āmilī has recorded more than two hundred traditions from Sunnī authentic sources transmitted by Sunnī transmission chains acknowledging Imam Mahdī's (AS) line of descent, occultation, and rise. For the sake of brevity, mention will be made of one tradition.
- d. The Messenger of God (SAW) said, "If but one day remains of the life of the world, God will prolong it and will make a man rise from my descendants to fill the earth with justice after having been brimming over with injustice."<sup>2</sup>
- If injustice sets the world ablaze,  
And there remains one day of the life of the world,  
God prolongs it  
Such that our Lord becomes triumphant over the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Cairo edition, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Ithbāt al-Hudā*, vol. 3, p. 608, tradition 123.

## Section 2

### The Period of Occultation of the Imam of the Age (AS)

#### Show Thy Countenance

This heart which has been in love with thee since pre-eternity,

Is restless to see thee morn and eve.

My heart's bird soars towards thy neighborhood to unite with thee

Setting its hopes to see thy countenance.

If you set foot in my sad hut one night,

I will be thy sacrifice out of passionate love and devotion.

My beloved! I am distraught out of separation from thee,

Show thy countenance and I will sacrifice my life for seeing your countenance.

The lover closes his eyes not to see anyone other than thee,

He will forgo his life and the world eager to unite with thee.

O Mahdi! Pray for your arrival,

Since the Truth will answer thy invocation.

The period of occultation of the Imam of the Age (AS) is one of the most significant parts of his lifetime. Mention will be made below of copious material in this regard.

#### 1. Meaning of Occultation

Does occultation connote that Imam is hiding somewhere, living at the corner of a cellar, resides in the farthest cities in the east and west of the world (*Jābulqā* and *Jābulsā*) and does not frequent anywhere? Could we say that something else

is intended by Occultation? Traditions reflect that despite being unknown to people, he frequents among them and knows them, whereas people see him but cannot recognize him. In this vein, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, "He frequents among people, walks in their markets and sets his feet on their carpets, but they do not know him."<sup>1</sup>

Occultation is basically antonymous with emergence. For instance, Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (AS) is reported as saying, "Since the time God created Prophet Adam (AS), the earth has not been devoid of Divine Arguments who have been manifest at times, but unknown and in occultation at other times."<sup>2</sup>

The Imam of the Age (AS) is in occultation, namely, he is not known to all people. Occultation herein denotes non-emergence rather than non-existence, since the latter interpretation would be against the traditions, such as those proving his pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*). It is narrated from Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān 'Amrī, the second deputy of the Imam of the Age (AS), as saying, "By God! The Imam of the Age goes to pilgrimage to Mecca every year. He sees people and knows them, but people see him without knowing him."<sup>3</sup>

Some traditions reflect his resemblance to Prophet Joseph (AS). From the a pulpit in Kufa, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Alī (AS), said, "If the earth happens to be devoid of the Divine Argument, it will devour its inhabitants; the Divine Argument knows people, though they do not know him. Similarly, Joseph (AS) knew people, though they did not know him."<sup>4</sup>

In this vein, the late Ḥājj Muḥammad 'Alī Fashandī, having had made numerous journeys to Mecca intending to join the audience of the Imam of the Age (AS), narrated that he

<sup>1</sup> *Ghaybat Nu'mānī*, p. 163, tradition 4, chapter 10; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 154, tradition 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 23, p. 5, under tradition 10, vol. 52, p. 92, tradition 6, narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (AS).

<sup>3</sup> *Kamāl al-Dīn*, vol. 3, p. 440; *Ithbāt al-Hudāh*, vol. 3, p. 452; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 350, vol. 52, p. 152, tradition 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 113, tradition 8.

had traveled to Mecca in 1353/1934 as a caravan assistant. He said, "I departed from Mecca to 'Ararāt on the eighth night to take the required measures for the arrivals of the pilgrims who were supposed to settle in 'Arafāt the following evening. I stayed awake that night. Having had established my night prayers, someone saluted me and entered the tent. He called me by his name. I prepared some place for him to sit. While conversing with each other, he said, 'Good for you Ḥājj Muḥammad 'Alī! You stay in this desert tonight where my grandfather, Imam Ḥusayn, stayed.' I asked him whether the Imam of the Age (AS) is present when the pilgrims travel to 'Arafāt. He said, 'Aye.' I inquired, 'Where is he?' He replied, 'Jabal al-Raḥma.' I proceeded to ask, 'Could our friends meet with him there?' He replied, 'They see him without recognizing him.'<sup>1</sup>

Imam Ṣādiq said, "The Rising Imam will have attributes of Prophets Moses, Joseph, Jesus (AS), and Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) ... that of Jesus will be his being unknown, since Joseph's (AS) brothers conversed with him while merchandizing with him without recognizing him."<sup>2</sup>

According to another tradition narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) on the authority of Sudayr Ṣayrafī, "Prophet Joseph's (AS) brothers were wise sons of the Prophet. They conversed and merchandized with Joseph, but notwithstanding being his brothers, they failed to recognize him until Joseph revealed his identity."<sup>3</sup>

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported, on the authority of Abū Baṣīr, as saying, "The Lord the Command (AS) possesses attributes of some of the Prophets ... that of Prophet Joseph (AS) is the veil cast by God between him and people such that they see the Imam, though they fail to recognize him."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Shifṭigān-i Ḥadrat-i Mahdī* ("Lovers of Imam Mahdī"), vol. 1, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> *Iḥbāt al-Hudāh*, vol. 3, p. 458.

<sup>3</sup> *Ghaybat Nu'mānī*, p. 163; *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 154, under tradition 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Kamāl al-Dīn*, vol. 2, p. 351, tradition 46; *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 224, tradition 10.

O thee! Thou art in my heart, though my heart is unaware of thee,

The world is brimming over with thee, though it is unaware of thee.

It is said in the Prayer of *Nudba*, recited every Friday morning, "May my soul be your sacrifice! You are the one in occultation, not beyond our reach. May my soul be your sacrifice! You are the one remote from your homeland, not beyond our reach."

## 2. Occultation in the Holy Qur'an and Traditions

Occultation constitutes one of the characteristics of the Imam of the Age (AS) mentioned by all Muslim Leaders (AS). They have informed people that the Twelfth Divine Argument will be in occultation. Mention will be made below of such instances in the Holy Qur'an and traditions.

### 2. 1. The Holy Qur'an

Reference has been made to occultation in the opening Qur'anic verses. "*Alif Lām Mīm*. This Book, whereof there is no doubt, guidance to those who are the pious, who believe in the unseen" (2:1-3).

Yahyā ibn Abī al-Qāsim inquired Imam Ṣādiq (AS) concerning these blessed verses. The noble Imam replied, "The followers of the Command of the Faithful (AS) and the occultation of the Divine Argument, namely the Imam in Occultation (AS) are intended by 'the pious' and 'the unseen.'"

Verse 20 of *Sūra Luqmān* (31) reads, "[God] has perfected His Bounties upon you, apparent and hidden." Ḥammād ibn Ziyād said, "I asked my master, Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (AS) about the meaning of the verse. He said, 'The Imam recognized by people and the Imam in occultation are intended by apparent and hidden bounties.' I inquired, 'Will there be any Imam in occultation?' He replied, 'Ayē. He will be hidden from people, but the believers' hearts will entertain his



remembrance. He will be our Twelfth Imam.”<sup>1</sup>

Verse 30 of *Sūra Mulk* (67) reads, “Say, ‘Tell me! If your pure water were to sink away, who then can supply you with pure water?’” ‘Alī ibn Ja‘far inquired his brother, Imam Mūsā ibn Ja‘far, regarding the interpretation of the verse. Imam replied, “What would you do if your Imam disappears such that you may not see him?”<sup>2</sup>

## 2. 2. The Traditions

### ● The Traditions of the Messenger of God (SAW)

a. “The ninth of them [from among the descendants of Imam Husayn (AS)] will be the Riser of my *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) and the guide of my community (*umma*). He will bear utmost resemblance to me in appearance, speech, and conduct. He will appear after a prolonged period of occultation.”<sup>3</sup>

b. “One who denies the Riser (AS), a descendant of mine, at the time of his occultation will die as if he died at the time of [pre-Islamic] ignorance.”<sup>4</sup>

c. “One who denies the Imam at the time of his occultation will in fact deny me.”<sup>5</sup>

d. “By the One who truly appointed me to prophethood to serve as bearer of glad tidings of the Riser from among my descendants who will be in occultation according to the pledge made with me.”<sup>6</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī (AS)

a. Mahdī (AS) will be my eleventh son [in line of descent].

He will fill the earth with justice after having been

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 64, tradition 66, p. 150, tradition 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 24, p. 100, tradition 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Kamāl al-Dīn*, p. 257.

<sup>4</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 73, tradition 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 73, under tradition 19.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 68, tradition 10.

brimming over with injustice. There will be perplexity and occultation because of him.”<sup>1</sup>

- b. By God Who appointed Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) to his prophetic mission and chose him from among all creatures! [He will rise in truth] but after a lapse of occultation and perplexity.”<sup>2</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Muḥtabā (AS)

- a. “The ninth son of my brother, Imam Ḥusayn (AS) [in line of descent] will be the son of the lady of the maids. God will prolong his lifetime during his occultation.”<sup>3</sup>
- b. “Prophet Jesus (AS) will establish prayer behind him. God Almighty will conceal his birth and himself from the eyes [of people].”<sup>4</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Ḥusayn (AS)

- a. “There will be an occultation for that Imam (AS) during which some people will be apostates and some will maintain their faith.”<sup>5</sup>
- b. “The Riser (AS) of this community will be my ninth son [in line of descent] and he will be in occultation.”<sup>6</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Sajjād (AS)

- a. “There will be two periods of occultation for the Riser (AS), one of which will be more prolonged than the other.”<sup>7</sup>
- b. “Whoever continues to pay his alms (*mawālāt*) to us during the occultation of our Riser (AS), God Almighty will grant

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 118, tradition 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 110, tradition 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 279, tradition 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 132, tradition 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 133, tradition 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 133, tradition 3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 134, tradition 1.

him the rewards of one thousands martyrs fell in the Battles of Badr and Uḥud.”<sup>1</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Bāqir (AS)

- a. “The Riser (AS) will possess a characteristic of Prophet Joseph (AS). Abū Baṣīr said, ‘I inquired about it.’ He replied, “Perplexity and occultation.”
- b. “The word *khunnas* in the blessed Verse connotes the Imam who will enter occultation in the year 260/873 to reappear like a shooting star.”<sup>2</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Ṣādiq (AS)

- a. “Verily, there will be a prolonged occultation for our Riser (AS).”<sup>3</sup>  
“The fifth son of the descendants of the Seventh Imam will be concealed from your eyes.”<sup>4</sup>
- c. “The Imams will be the descendants of Imam Ḥusayn (AS), the last of who will be the Riser who will rise after his period of occultation.”<sup>5</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Kāẓim (AS)

- a. “The Lord of Command (AS) will inevitably go into occultation.”<sup>6</sup>
- b. “The Riser (AS) will be my five sons [in line of descent] the period of whose occultation will be prolonged.”<sup>7</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Riḍā (AS)

- a. “The Divine Argument (AS), awaited during his period

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 125, tradition 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 51, tradition 26, p. 137, tradition 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 142, tradition 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 32, tradition 4, p. 143, tradition 4, p. 145, tradition 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 23, tradition 40, p. 144, tradition 9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 150, tradition 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 151, tradition 6.

of occultation, will succeed his father, Imam Ḥasan ‘Askarī (AS).”<sup>1</sup>

b. “... Their Imam will be concealed from their eyes.”<sup>2</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Jawād (AS)

a. The period of occultation of the noble Imam will be prolonged.”<sup>3</sup>

b. He is the one whose birth and person will be concealed from people’s eyes.”<sup>4</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam Hādī (AS)

a. “Await deliverance when your Lord goes into occultation from tyrants’ abode.”<sup>5</sup>

b. “If it be not be for the sake of scholars calling people to the Riser and defending his religion during his period of occultation, there will remain no one unless they would deviate from the religion of God.”<sup>6</sup>

### ● The Traditions of Imam ‘Askarī (AS)

a. “Indeed, there will be a period of occultation for my son during which people will be in doubt unless those protected by God.”<sup>7</sup>

b. “Verily, there will be a period of occultation for him during which the ignorant will be in perplexity and the followers of falsehood will be led to perdition.”<sup>8</sup>

c. “By God! There will be a period of occultation during which no one will find deliverance unless those who

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 154, tradition 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 152, tradition 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 157, tradition 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 157, tradition 5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 159, tradition 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, vol. 2, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 160, tradition 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 160, tradition 7.

will, by Divine Grace, be steadfast in their belief in imamate on whom God will grant the blessing of invoking Him for his early arrival.”<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Cause of Occultation

Questions may be raised as to the reason behind the occultation of Divine Argument hence people’s deprivation of the blessings of his arrival. It is reflected in some traditions that occultation is Divine Command and a secret unknown to people. Thus God preordained occultation for His Argument.

The Messenger of God (SAW) said to Jābir, “O Jābir! It is a Divine Command and a Divine Secret. It is unknown to God’s servants and they may not know the truth behind it. ...”<sup>2</sup>

Imam ‘Askarī (AS) said to Aḥmad ibn Ishāq, “O Aḥmad ibn Ishāq! Occultation is a Divine Command, a Divine Secret, and something unseen from His Unseen.”<sup>3</sup>

Some traditions indicate that this Divine Command and Great Secret will be known to people upon the arrival of Divine Argument.

‘Abd Allah ibn Faḍl Hāshimī said, “I heard from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) as saying, ‘There will be occultation for the Lord of the Command. ...’ I inquired, ‘Why should he be in occultation?’ He replied, ‘For some reason which we are not allowed to disclose to you.’ I asked, ‘What is the reason behind the occultation?’ He answered, ‘His occultation is like that of his preceding Divine Arguments and it will not be known to people before his arrival; in the same manner that the reason behind the things done by Khidr was not disclosed to Moses (AS) before their separation. O son of Faḍl! Verily, this is a Divine Command, a secret of His, and something from His World of Unseen. Having acknowledged that God Almighty is All-Wise, We accept that all his Deeds are Wise,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 23, tradition 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 38, p. 126, tradition 76.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 23, tradition 16.

even if we know nothing about them.”<sup>1</sup> However, the reasons behind occultation are reflected in some traditions of which mention will be made below.

### 3. 1. People's Ingratitude

Occultation is on a par with affliction and depravation, though such depravation is consequent to our deeds. Imam's availability to the society is a great blessing, but as people failed to show gratitude for such blessing, they were deprived of it. In this vein, Imām Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, "Divine Inevitable Command is such that if He grants some blessing to His servants, He will not take it back unless they commit sins thereby depriving themselves of availing themselves of it."<sup>2</sup> The Holy Qur'an (8:53) reads, "That is so because God will never change a blessing which He has granted to people until they change their own state."

A community that changes its course from obedience to its leader will be deprived by God of such grace and it is a Divine Tradition. In this respect, the Holy Qur'an (13:11) says, "God will not change the state of a people as long as they do not change their own." People's ingratitude for the grace of Imams' (AS) availability led to Divine Wrath and their own deprivation of it. Imam Bāqir (AS) said, "We will be remote from them upon Divine Wrath."<sup>3</sup> He is also reported as saying, "God will separate us from people when He does not favor our association with them."<sup>4</sup>

### 3. 2. Trial of People

Trial of people is another reason behind occultation. The noble Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far said, "The Lord of the Command will be in occultation during which those formerly professing to his imamate turn away from him. It is a Divine Trial

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 91, tradition 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 73, p. 334, tradition 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 343, tradition 31.

<sup>4</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 90, tradition 2.

through which people are being tested.”<sup>1</sup>

We might have seen instances when a teacher leaves his class for a while, hiding somewhere in order to observe the conducts of his students and draw a distinction between dutiful and unruly students. The occultation of the Imam of the Age (AS) is similar to it, though the Imam knows the result in advance. The goal of such trial is to make it evident to people that everyone is supposed to know themselves and the degree of their obligation to the rules.

Imam's (AS) occultation is a trial for people during which it will be known to them that who will take advantage of his occultation and call people unto themselves and who will remember the noble Imam (AS), heed their own conducts, and call people unto the Imam (AS). Occultation aims at making a distinction between those who remain steadfast in maintaining their faith and those who lose their faith and thereby reflect their weakness; those who will feel his empty place and suffer from his unavailability to them and those who are indifferent to it; those who suffer and mourn owing to being separated from him and those who are preoccupied with enjoying themselves and mundane affairs. The result of the trial is discernment of believers from unbelievers, the pure from the impure, and those attending to mundane affairs and those heeding religious obligations.

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, “People have to be tried and screened and many fail the trial.”<sup>2</sup> Imam Riḍā (AS) said, “What you have aspire will not realize unless you be tried in the crucible. Then, the pure will be separated from the impure and a small number of you will remain.” Then, he recited this blessed Qur’anic verse (29:1-2), “*Alif Lām Mīm. Do people think that they will be left alone since they say, ‘We believe,’ and they will not be tried?*”<sup>3</sup>

Imam Bāqir (AS) said, “Alas! Deliverance will not fall into our share unless you be screened, again and again, until

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<sup>1</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 132; *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 113, tradition 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 302; *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 114, tradition 31.

<sup>3</sup> Also see Mufid, *Irshād*, vol. 2, p. 375; *Ilzām al-Nāṣib*, vol. 2, p. 129.

impurity be separated from purity.”<sup>1</sup> Imam Ṣādiq is reported as saying, “Nay, by God! What you aspire will not actu’Alize unless the misfortune and fortune fall into the shares of the unfortunate and the fortunate.”<sup>2</sup>

### 3. 3. Imperfections of the Noble Imam’s (AS) Supporters

One of the reasons behind occultation is perfection of the noble Imam’s (AS) companions, since the conditions of his arrival include gathering of 313 supporters of him. The noble Imam Jawād (AS) said, “The number of his companions and supporters will be equal to that of Muslim warrior fighting at the Battle of Badr, namely 313. God will command his arrival when such number of devotees gathers around him.”<sup>3</sup> In this vein, Imam Bāqir (AS) said, “When 313 supporters gather around Imam (AS), as many as Muslim warriors fighting at the Battle of Badr, it will be incumbent upon him to rise.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, our Lord lives in occultation and solitude since such number of supporters have not gathered around him and it is the most significant reason for his estrangement and oppression. How it is that such small number have not gathered in so many years despite the multitude of Muslims? How is it that Muslims have abandoned Divine Argument and do not think about supporting him? How is it that they have forgotten their covenant with him?

The noble Imam’s (AS) epistle to Shaykh Mufīd reads, “If our followers, may God grant them His Blessings, set their hearts upon our covenant, they would not be deprived of visiting us and they would have the pleasure of early meeting with us.”<sup>5</sup> But, it is a pity that they broke their covenant with him in the manner that they broke their allegiance to his grandfather, Imam Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī (AS), the

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 113, tradition 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 112, tradition 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 283, tradition 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 100, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 53, p. 177.



Commander of the Faithful, and left him alone. He called them, many a time, to support him, but they remained inactive; first, they took the innocent scholar alone to the mosque, set his home on fire, and slew him without any reason. They failed to attend to the innocent calls of his grandfather, Imam Ḥusayn (AS) to render him assistance and abandoned the beloved of Zahrā amid so many wolves and savages in that desert.

Now, the call of God's Remainder is heard from estrangement, calling us, we who pretend love and friendship for him. Is it not a Shī'ī obligation to render assistance to the Shī'ī Imam? Imam 'Alī (AS), the Commander of the Faithful said, "God chose us, the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS), from among His creatures and choose followers for us whose characteristic, above all, is to render us assistance."<sup>1</sup> It is one of the obligations of the Shī'īs towards their the Pure Imams (AS) to render them assistance at all times and such assistance takes different forms at different times; they may be obliged to take arms and defend the Imam (AS). The companions of Imam Ḥusayn (AS) acted upon their obligation in the best possible manner and attained to the most exalted degree, namely the Imam's (AS) emotional and physical support. Their hearts were brimming over with love for their Imam (AS) and they were restless to sacrifice their lives for him. They excelled others in resisting the enemy with all their might.

Supporting the Imam is not restricted to taking arms against the enemy, but they could render him assistance in other ways, e. g. obedience to his commands, re'Alization of his demands, following his instructions, teaching the ignorant, leading those in error, calling people to join the Imam of the Age (AS), helping the indigent, rendering aid to the weak, persevering on the path of truth, awaiting the Riser's arrival, praying for his early arrival, being eager and prepared to support the noble Imam (AS). It is through such intentions that the awaiting join the supporters of the Imam of the Age

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 44, p. 287.

(AS) and his companions and the prayer of the Messenger of God (SAW) applies to him: "O God! Love whoever loves him! Be an enemy to whoever is his enemy! Assist whoever assists him! Humiliates whoever humiliates him." The Commander of the Faithful said, "Divine Mercy will be granted to whoever assists and loves us."<sup>1</sup>

### 3. 4. Having Pledged no Allegiance to Any Ruler

Another reason of occultation is to have pledged no allegiance to any ruler. It is a characteristic of the Imam of the Age (AS) that his forefathers (AS) had to live under the rules of their contemporaneous tyrants in order to maintain the religion of God and safeguard their own security and that of their followers, but the Imam of the Age (AS), whose birth was unknown to the public, is supposed to struggle against all tyrants and divest the powerful of their power, shatter the crowns and thrones of tyrants, and put an end to the disgraceful corrupt rules, hence his occultation and awaiting the Command of God Almighty to rise when the ground is paved for his arrival.

Imam Muġtabā (AS) said, "God Almighty will keep the birth of the noble Imam (AS) unknown to the public and will cover his sacred being behind the cover of occultation so that he will have pledged no allegiance to anyone upon his rise."<sup>2</sup> Imam Riḍā (AS) was inquired about the noble Imam's (AS) occultation, to which he replied: "So that he may not have pledged any allegiance to anyone when he takes arms to rise."<sup>3</sup>

### 3. 5. Applicability of the Prophet's (AS) Traditions to the Noble Imam (AS)

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "There will be a prolonged occultation for our riser." The narrator of the tradition, Sudayr, inquired about prolongation of occultation, to which

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<sup>1</sup> *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 108.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 132, tradition 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 152, tradition 1, vol. 52, p. 96, tradition 14.

the Imam (AS) replied: "God Almighty will not accept it unless the traditions of the Prophets (AS) concerning their occultation apply to the noble Imam (AS). O Sudayr! He will have to be in occultation whose length of time will equal the Prophets' (AS) periods of occultation."<sup>1</sup>

### 3. 6. Birth of Believers in Unbelievers' Loins

Imam Šādiq (AS) said, "God has placed semen of believers in the loins of unbelievers and hypocrites. The Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī(AS) did not slay such fathers, so that what is placed in trust in their loins until they fathered children, then he had no consideration about slaying them. The riser of us, the *Ahl al-Bayt*, acts likewise, he will not arrive unless those Divine Trusts see the light."<sup>2</sup>

### 3. 7. Coming to Reigns by All Walks of People

Imam Šādiq (AS) said, "Arrival will not realize unless all walks of life come to power so that no one could say that if they ruled, they administered justice. Imam Mahdī (AS) will rise in justice at that time."<sup>3</sup> He is also reported as saying, "Indeed, our rule will be the last of rules and there will remain no house aspiring to rule unless they come to power before us, so that when they notice our ways, they may not say that if they had come to power, they would have acted likewise. It is in the Holy Qur'an (7:128) that "The end is for the pious."<sup>4</sup>

Some strata and groups may imagine that they are able to turn the darkness enfolding the world into light, eradicate tyranny, administer justice in the world, liberate the oppressed from the yoke of the tyrants and the arrogant, imagining that if they come to power, they may achieve their goal. God Almighty paves the path for them to be vested with power so that they may attempt at raising such doubts.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 142, tradition 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 97, tradition 19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 244, tradition 119.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 339, tradition 83, p. 332, tradition 58.

### 3. 8. Safeguarding Imam's (AS) Life

The reasons of occultation include protection of the last Divine Argument against his enemies. Since people mistreated his noble forefathers, God Almighty concealed His Last Remainder from the public eye so that ground be paved for his arrival. Imam Šādiq (AS) said, "Verily, there will be occultation for the Riser (AS) prior to his arrival." The narrator of the tradition, Zurāra, inquired about the reason. The Imam replied, "Since his life is in jeopardy."<sup>1</sup> Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (AS) is reported as saying, "There will be occultation for my fifth son [in line of descent] which will be prolonged, since his life will be in jeopardy."<sup>2</sup>

### 4. Paving the Path and Making People Prepared for Entering the Age of Occultation

In his *Ithbāt al-Tawṣiyya*, Mas'ūdī writes, "It is narrated that Imam Hādī (AS) concealed himself from public eye and only met with a limited number of his followers. When Imam 'Askarī (AS) was appointed the Imam, He conversed with his followers from behind a veil. Thus, the conducts of these two noble Imams (AS) served as prelude to the occultation of the Imam of the Age (AS) so that the Shī'ī may be acquainted with occultation and they could tolerate it with further facility."<sup>3</sup>

Questions raised by people under Imam Hādī (AS) and Imam 'Askarī (AS) were mainly answered by letters communicated to the recipients through their prominent companions. 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd, a favorite companion of Imam 'Askarī (AS) communicated people's letters and gifts to Imam (AS) in the guise of an oil dealer. He was a special deputy of Imam 'Askarī (AS) who was later appointed as one of the four deputies of the noble Imam Mahdī (AS) during his minor

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<sup>1</sup> *Kamāl al-Dīn*, vol. 2, p. 233, tradition 7, chapter 44; *Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 338, tradition 9; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 95, tradition 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Kamāl al-Dīn*, vol. 2, p. 361, tradition 5; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 151, tradition 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ithbāt al-Waṣiyya*, p. 262.

occultation. Such deputies played a significant and valuable role at the time, serving as a means of communication and intermediary between the Shi'ī and the Imam (AS).

The period of occultation of the Imam of the Age (AS) may fall into two periods, known as minor and major occultation, as attested in our traditions.<sup>1</sup>

## 5. Minor Occultation and Brief Introduction of the Four Deputies

As mentioned above, occultation of the Imam of the Age (AS) began by following precise plans of interest unless the Shi'ī may not suffer religious and doctrinal blows. Minor occultation began in 260/873, subsequent to Imam 'Askari's (AS) martyrdom. The link between Imam and the Shi'ī community was not totally severed but people were in contact with their Imam through special deputies who imparted Imam's (AS) messages and responses to questions. The four deputies of Imam (AS) included 'Uthmān ibn Sa'id 'Amrī, Muḥammad ibn 'Uthman 'Amrī, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ Nawbakhtī, and 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Samurī. They were perfectly reliable trustees chosen by the Infallible Imam (AS) and acted upon their obligations in the best possible manner. A brief introduction of them will follow.

### a. 'Uthmān ibn Sa'id

'Uthmān ibn Sa'id 'Amrī was the first special deputy of the Imam of the Age (AS) in the minor period of occultation. He had also served as Imam Hādī's (AS) and Imam 'Askari's (AS) deputy.

Aḥmad ibn Ishāq, a Shi'ī notable, says, "Once I joined the holy audience of Imam Hādī (AS), inquiring, 'O master! I may not join your audience at all times, is there somebody whose

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, it is narrated from the Chief of Worshippers (*sayyid al-sajjīdīn*; AS) as saying, "There will be two periods of occultation for our Riser, once of which will be further prolonged, see *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 135.

words I may hear and obey his commands?' Imam replied, Abū 'Amr is a trusted person and will impart my messages to you.' After Imam Hādī's (AS) demise, I joined the holy audience of Imam 'Askarī (AS) and reiterated my inquiry. Imam 'Askarī (AS) said, Abū 'Amr is a trusted person, trusted by the preceding Imam and me, in my lifetime and thereafter. He imparts to you what he hears from me. Be obedient to him."<sup>1</sup>

In his *Kitāb al-Ghayba* Shaykh Ṭūsī narrates that once forty Shī'īs, accompanied by 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd, joined the audience of Imam 'Askarī (AS). The latter showed them his son, saying, "This son of mine will succeed me as Imam. Obey him! ... Behold that you will not see him any longer. During his occultation, listen to 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd and obey him, since he is your Imam's deputy and he is vested with administration of affairs."<sup>2</sup> Ṭūsī further writes, "It was on the orders of Imam 'Askarī (AS) that 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd received the gifts presented by some Shī'īs from Yemen. Some people present there said, 'By God! 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd is the best of your Shī'īs, but we recognized his exalted position by receiving the gifts.' Imam 'Askarī (AS) said, 'Aye, bear witness that he is my deputy and his son, Muḥammad, will by the deputy of my son, Mahdī."<sup>3</sup>

'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd died in 265/878.

#### b. Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān 'Amrī

Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, son of 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd, was the second special deputy from among the four deputies, whose deputyship of Imam Mahdī (AS) was stipulated in the abovementioned tradition narrated from Imam 'Askarī (AS) in which the Imam (AS) praised 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd's exalted position, invoked God to grant him His Mercy and Rewards,

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 344.

<sup>2</sup> Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, p. 357, tradition 319, chapter 6; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 346.

<sup>3</sup> Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, p. 355, tradition 317, chapter 6; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 345.

and appointed him as the deputy of his son. A passage from his noble epistle reads, "It was your father's happiness par excellence that God bestowed a son like you upon him so that you may be his successor and deputy."<sup>1</sup> A passage from another epistle issued by the Imam following the demise of 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd reads, "And the son, may God protect him, has been always trusted by us during his father's lifetime and his exalted position to us is on a par with his father's and he has thus filled the vacuum created by his father's demise."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, Shī'ī texts in their entirety are unanimous with regard to his justice, authority, and trustworthiness and so long as he was 'Alive, the noble epistles of Imam (AS) were communicated by him to the Shī'ī written in same hand communicated by his father, 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd and Imam's (AS) miracles imparted by him led to their further insightfulness.

It is also reported that he collected many jurisprudence sources whose material constituted what was heard from Imam 'Askarī (AS), the Imam of the Age (AS), and his father, 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd, upon his deathbed, he vested them with the succeeding deputy, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ.<sup>3</sup> This notable figure, after forty years of deputyship, passed away in late Jumādā I 305/mid November 917.

### c. Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ

Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ Nawbakhtī was the third special deputy of the Imam of the Age (AS). He was introduced to the Shī'ī by Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān in the latter's last fruitful years and at times the former referred the Shī'ī to the latter. Ja'far ibn Muḥammad Madā'inī says, "The gifts I presented to the Imam of the Age (AS) in my last meeting with him constituted 400 dinars. He said to me, 'Take them to Ḥusayn

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<sup>1</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 51, p. 350.

ibn Rūḥ.' Having noticed that it was hard for me, he said, 'I appointed Abū al-Qāsim Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ as my deputy to act on my behalf."<sup>1</sup>

Ja'far ibn Aḥmad ibn Matil, regarded by some to be the third deputy, said, "Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān was on deathbed when I and Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ were seated on either sides of his bed. Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān looked at me, saying, 'I've been ordered to appoint Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ in my place and provide him with my testament.' I arose and took the hand of Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ to exchange my place with him." He was so conservative in discretionary concealment of his beliefs and dealt with opponents in such a way that the followers of each of the four Sunnī schools claimed that he followed their school. After serving as Imam's (AS) deputy for a period of 21 years, he died in Sha'bān 326/June 938.

**d. 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Samurī**

'Alī ibn Muḥammad Samurī was the fourth special deputy of the Imam of the Age (AS). He succeeded Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ on the orders of the Imam upon Ḥusayn's demise. 'Alī assumed his significant responsibility to lead the Shī'ī community during their Imam's (AS) occultation. When he was requested to appoint his successor, he said, "I haven't received any command to appoint anyone as my successor." In his last fruitful days, he received a noble epistle addressed to him the the Imam of the Age (AS) which reads, "In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate. ... O 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Samurī! May God increase the rewards of your brethren following your demise. Verily, you will pass away in six days. Take care of your affairs and do not appoint anybody as your successor, since the period of complete [major] occultation has arrived and there will be no arrival without Divine Command when the period of occultation will prolong, hearts will be hardened, and the world will brim over with injustice."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 361.



Minor occultation came to an end after a period of 70 years in 329/941 and major occultation began upon the demise of the last special deputy of the Imam of the Age (AS).

## 6. Passages Selected from the Noble Epistles by the Imam of the Age (AS)

The Imam of the Age (AS), the noble Remainder of God, the Lord of Time, the Divine Argument of the Age, and the soul of souls, may our souls be his sacrifice, penned a number of epistles, precious pearls from the boundless ocean of the Imam's (AS) knowledge, addressed to the Shi'ī, constituting responses to their questions or addressing some individuals by his noble decrees. Such luminous epistles have been collected in invaluable works,<sup>1</sup> references to some of whose passages will be made below.

Passages from an epistle addressing those entertaining doubts as to religion reads, "In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate. May God delivers us and you from seditions and bestow upon us and you the spirit of certainty and a safe haven from an evil end. I have been apprised that some of you have entertained doubts about religion and the Lords of Command. Such doubts have saddened us ... because of you, rather than because of us, since God Almighty is with us and we need no one besides him and as we are in the right, we are not afraid of anyone turning away from us. We are indirectly raised and educated by the Lord and all people are raised and educated by us."<sup>2</sup>

"O people! What is it that you have entangled with doubts

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<sup>1</sup> The most comprehensive collection of such epistles is *Kalimat al-Imām al-Mahdī* by the erudite scholar, Ayatollah Sayyid Ḥasan Shīrāzī, may God bestow His Mercy upon him.

<sup>2</sup> Similar remarks were uttered by the Commander of the Faithful, "We are produced by our Lord and the people are our products." One should confess that we may not perceive the profound meaning of such passage and one may say that they are all needless and all people are in need of their grace, see *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 25, p. 24, tradition 42.

and perplexity? Have you heard not that God Almighty says, 'O people who have believed! Obey God, the Messenger of God, and the Lords of Command! Do you know not that what has been passed down in traditions have been realized and they apply to your Imams? May God grant Grace to them and their predecessors? Have you not seen how God ordained safe havens for you? See refuge in them and the Signs be which you may be guided from the time of Adam (AS) to that of Imam 'Askarī (AS). Whenever a banner or a Sign disappears, further banners and Signs came into view. Whenever a star declined, another rose.

"When Imam 'Askarī (AS) passed away, you imagined that God rendered His religion void and thereby severed the link between Him and the people? Nay, there has never been and there will never be likewise until Resurrection be established and His Command be manifest, even though they may not like it.

"The preceding Imam, namely Imam 'Askarī (AS), precisely trod the luminous path his forefathers and passed away in happiness. His testament and knowledge rest in us, his successor, and whoever fill the vacuum created by his demise, serving as his successor. No one, but sinners, enters any disputation against us regarding succession and no one, but disbelievers, deny such exalted position. Had it not been for triumph of Divine Command and keeping His Secret from you, our truth and right would have been manifest to you, such that it would have led your reason to perplexity. However, Divine Will shall pass and everything is Divinely Ordained. So, fear God, show us obedience, and return unto us what you fail to perceive. We are able to solve problems and it is vested with us, as we have already remarked.

"Do not strive to uncover what is concealed from you! Do not incline towards extremes! Turn to us with affection based on the manifest tradition. I provided you with counsels out of benevolence and God is All-Aware of my state and yours."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 53, p. 178, tradition 9.

Another epistle, addressing the questions raised by Ishāq ibn Ya'qūb issued to Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān 'Amrī, reads, "But regarding occultation, God Almighty said, 'O you who have believed, do not ask about what becomes manifest and you are displeased with it.' There has been an imposed pledge of allegiance for all my forefathers against the tyrants of their times, but when I rise, there will be no such allegiance imposed on me.

"But the manner of availing yourselves of me during my period of occultation, the similitude of which is the sun enshrouded by clouds. I am indeed a source of protection and security for all the inhabitants of the earth, like the stars which are sources of protection to the inhabitants of the heaven. Close the doors of questions which are not relevant to you and whose knowledge is not required by you. Do not impose such troubles on yourselves. And pray much for hastening of deliverance which will be your deliverance."<sup>1</sup>

Another epistle, addressing some questions raised by Muḥammad ibn Ja'far Asadī, issued to Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān 'Amrī, reads, "But, regarding your question about one who regards as lawful what of our property is in his control or misappropriates them without our permission. Such person is damned and we will be his adversaries on the Day of Resurrection."<sup>2</sup>

## 7. Major Occultation

Upon the outset of major occultation, the link between Imam (AS) and the Shī'ī through special deputies severed and people have been obliged to refer to the general deputies of the noble Imam (AS) for finding solutions to their religious problems. A passage of the noble epistle of the Imam of the Age (AS), addressing some questions raised by Ishāq ibn Ya'qūb, issued to the second special deputy, reads, "Regarding surfacing occurrences and questions, refer to the transmitters

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 53, p. 181, tradition 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 53, p. 182, under tradition 11.

of our traditions, since they are your authorities, as I am the Divine Argument possessing authority over them.”<sup>1</sup>

The noble Lord of Martyrs [Imam Husayn] (AS) is reported as saying, “Administration of affairs should be in hands of those who know God and are trusted by him with what is lawful and unlawful.”<sup>2</sup>

People have not been abandoned devoid of a safe haven and a guardian at this stage of occultation, but certain people, mentioned by their qu’Alifications rather than by names, to be religious scholars well-versed in the school of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) worthy of serving as general deputies of the Imam of the Age (AS) lead the Shi’i community. In this vein, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, “It is incumbent upon all people to follow any of the jurisprudents in control of his concupiscent<sup>3</sup> self and obedient to his master’s commands.”<sup>4</sup> It is worthy of note that such qu’Alifications are not to be found in any religious scholar and jurisprudent. In this respect, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) mentioned in the above mentioned tradition, “Only some Shi’i jurisprudents, rather than all of them, are like that.”

Thus, people are in contact with their religion and religious leaders and maintain such relation in the period of occultation. It is noteworthy that the Imam of the Age (AS) is attentively observing our deeds from behind the veil, as

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 53, p. 181, under tradition 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 97, p. 79. It is worthy of note that such individuals should be well-versed in religious matters and what is lawful or unlawful and secondly follow the rules regarding lawfulness and unlawfulness, declaring what is declared by God as lawful or unlawful, without making any alterations in divine laws. If they happen to be likewise, they may maintain religion as pleased by the Legislator and thereby ward off any harm and blight to religion.

<sup>3</sup> That is, he has made his self obedient to his reason, religion, and master. Such person is in control of his self rather than be obedient to his self and is able to prefer God’s Command over his own desires and ignore his desires at the price of following the commands of his master and the Imam of the Age (AS).

<sup>4</sup> *Wasā’il al-Shi’a*, vol. 27, p. 131, tradition 20; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, p. 88, tradition 12.

mentioned in his noble epistle, "Although we have settled in a place remote from tyrants, as it is deemed fit and appropriate for us and our followers so that we may distance ourselves from them as long as they lord over the world, but we are fully apprised of all the occurrences happening to you and nothing of your state of affairs is unknown to us." Another passage of the same noble epistle reads, "We have not neglected your state of affairs nor have we consigned you to oblivion, otherwise afflictions would have befallen you and you would have been destroyed by your enemies."

In this vein, mention will be made of an instance of Imam's (AS) particular attention accorded to the Shi'ī. The late Ayatollah Nā'inī, may God bestow His Grace upon him, was quite distressed in the midst of World War I and the British and Russian occupation of Iran. He was anxious about the fall of the land of lovers and supporters of the Imam of the Age (AS). One night he invokes the Imam of the Age (AS) to deliver them and falls sleep in tears and distress. He dreams that a wall with the map of Iran hung on it has been shattered and it is about to collapse on some women and children. The late Ayatollah becomes so distressed by the vision that he shouts, "O God! What is going to befall on them?" He notices that the noble Lord of the Age (AS), may our souls be his sacrifice, points at the collapsing wall, restoring it to its former state, saying, "This is the home of the Shi'īs and our home. It was about to collapse endangering lives, but we will not allow it to collapse. We will hold it tight."<sup>1</sup>

Another instance of the grace of the Imam of the Age (AS) is the deliverance of the Shi'ī of Bahrain. When Bahrain was under foreign rule, foreigners had appointed a ruler whose vizier excelled him in terms of animosity against the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) and always devised stratagems to harm and destroy them. The vizier came to the ruler once day, holding a pomegranate in his hand. He showed it to the ruler, saying it was naturally inscribed on it, "There is no god, but Allah;

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<sup>1</sup> *Farāz-hā'i az Tajalliyāt-i Imām-i 'Aṣr 'alayhi 'l-Salām*, p. 54.

Muḥammad is the Messenger of God and Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, and 'Alī (AS) are the successors of the Messenger of God." The ruler reflected on it for a while, but could not believe that it could be a fabrication. So, he said to the vizier, "This is an evident Sign and a decisive proof rejecting the v'Alidity of Shī'ism. What do you think of the Shī'ī of Bahrain?"

The vizier said, "They are a bunch of diehards rejecting any proof. To me, it would be a good idea to show it to them. If they return to our religion, you will be greatly rewarded, but if they declined and persisted in their error, let them opt for one of the three options: to produce a convincing answer, to pay *jizya* [namely the tax levied on non-Muslims living under the protection of Islamic rule], or we massacre them, captivate their wives and children, and seize their property as booty.

The ruler was pleased with his suggestion and summoned Shī'ī scholars, showing them the pomegranate, saying, "If you fail to produce a convincing answer, prepare yourselves for massacre, captivity, and plunder or paying *jizya*. Shī'ī scholars demanded a three day respite and left him in awe. After exchanging views, they came to the conclusion to select ten people from among the most God fearing Shī'īs and they may select three. They requested one of the three to go to the desert at night invoking the Imam of the Age (AS) so that they may find some deliverance. He spent the night on praying to God, weeping all night, invoking the Imam of the Age (AS) to render them assistance, though his invocation was of no avail. They sent the second person on the following night, but he came bare-handed like his predecessor.

Further distressed, they sent the third person, a man by the name of Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā, to the desert. He went barefoot at that dark night and invoked God in tears, seeking assistance from the Imam of the Age (AS). He heard late at night a voice, as if he was called by his name, "Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā! What has happened? What is it that you have come to the desert?" He replied, "Please leave me alone! I'm distressed and I cannot talk of my afflictions to anyone but the Imam of

the Age (AS). I am invoking him to deliver us from our entanglements." He said, "Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā! I am the Lord of Command. What is your demand?" He said, "If you are my Imam of the Age (AS), you are aware of my demand and there would be no need to talk about it." He said, "Aye, Your problem is the story of the pomegranate and its inscription and the threat posed by the ruler." When he heard that, He turned to him, saying, "Aye, my master. You are aware of our issue. You are our Imam and safe haven. You can find a solution to our problem."

He replied, "O Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā! There is a pomegranate tree in the house of the cursed vizier. When the tree bore fruit, he made a pomegranate out of mud, cut it into halves and wrote the inscription on it and when the pomegranate grew, it was impressed by the inscription. Go to the ruler tomorrow saying that you will produce the answer at the vizier's home. When you reached there, look on your right. There is a room there. Tell the ruler that the answer is in that room and do not allow the vizier to reach there before you. Tell him that if the vizier precedes us in entering the room, we may not produce an answer. Upon entering the room, you will see a white bag there containing the mud mold. Show it to the ruler to divulge his secret. Also tell the ruler that the other sign, that pomegranate, is nothing but smoke and ashes, and if he wants to be certain and perceive the truth of your words, order the vizier to break the pomegranate. Upon breaking it, his face and beard will be sullied by smoke and ashes.

Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā was very happy to have found the solution to the problem. Kissing his noble hands, he bore the glad tidings to his people. The day after, he acted upon Imam's (AS) instructions and saw it for himself. Having been apprised of the stratagem, the ruler asked him about the identity of the person who informed him of such cunning. He replied, "Our Imam of the Age and the Divine Argument on us." The ruler inquired about the Imam of the Age (AS) and Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā enumerated the Infallible Imams in chronological order to the Imam of the Age (AS). The ruler

bore witness to Divine Unity, Prophetic mission, immediate c'Aliphate of Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS) -the Commander of the Faithful- and infallibility of the Imams, then ordered the execution of the cursed vizier and apologized to the people of Bahrain."<sup>1</sup>

## 8. Questions Concerning Occultation

**Q.1. Is occultation not in harmony with the grace leading to Imam's (AS) arrival?**

A. No, since people are either responsible for Imam's (AS) occultation owing to their sins or occultation does not entail any problem to them, in the words of Imam Sajjād (AS), "God Almighty has granted perception and reason to them such that to them, occultation resembles observation."<sup>2</sup> In this vein, Imam Šādiq (AS) is reported as saying, "God knows that his friends do not entertain doubts; even if He knows about their doubt, He will not conceal him in the twinkling of an eye."<sup>3</sup>

Further, without occultation, it would not be possible to observe the deeds of worthy people and the best reason for occultation is its occurrence. Many a pious have been granted such grace whose accounts are attested in relevant sources. Sayyid ibn Tāwūs (may God grant him peace) thus said to his child, "The path towards imamate is open to one who invokes God to bestow His Grace upon him and bring to perfection His Benevolence."<sup>4</sup>

**Q.2. What is the difference between his being in occultation when he is unavailable and his non-existence?**

A. Firstly, his occultation is not to us on a par with absolute unavailability, but we maintain that many a saint

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<sup>1</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 53, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 122, tradition 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 145, tradition 67, p. 94, tradition 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Kashf al-Mahajja*, p. 154, chapter 150.



have joined his audience. Secondly, those Shi'is believing in imamate on whom such grace has not been bestowed know that their Imam lives among them, observing their deeds, and are certain that it is incumbent upon them to follow him. Such knowledge suffices to impede them from committing vices and urges them to act upon their obligations.

### Q.3. What is the use of the Imam in occultation?

A. Quite interesting responses have been reflected in brief in many a tradition. Jābir ibn 'Abd Allah Anṣārī asked the Messenger of God (SAW), "Will the Shi'is be able to avail themselves of the Imam in occultation?" the noble Prophet (SAW) replied, "Aye, by God who appointed me to prophethood! They will avail themselves of his being, enjoying the light of his guardianship during his occultation, in the manner that they use the sun, even if clouds enfold it."<sup>1</sup>

A'mash narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) as saying, "The world has not been devoid of Divine Argument since the day God created Adam and it will not be devoid of him and if it were not likewise, God would not be worshipped." He was inquired, "How do people avail themselves of the Argument?" Imam replied, "In the same manner that they avail themselves of the sun shrouded in clouds."<sup>2</sup>

A noble epistle by Imam (AS) addressed to Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān 'Amrī, the second particular deputy, reads, "Now, the qu'Alīty people availing themselves of me during occultation is like using the sun shrouded behind clouds."<sup>3</sup>

The holy being of the noble Commander of the Age (AS) during his occultation is likened in traditions to the sun enshrouded by clouds. Such beautiful similitude embraces valuable and delicate points, to some of which reference will be made below.

a. In like manner that existence of the sun behind clouds

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 93, tradition 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 92, tradition 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 53, p. 181.

may not be denied, existence of the noble Remainder of God (AS), concealed from people's eyes, may not be rejected.

- b. When the sun is enshrouded by clouds, particularly when it takes long, people watch the sky to see when clouds disappear and the sun shines. Likewise, some people eagerly await the disappearance of the clouds of occultation to see the beautiful countenance of the noble Imam of the Age (AS).
- c. Shrouded by clouds, the sun does not cease from its motion in the heavenly spheres thus giving birth to the material growth and development of creatures. Although the Imam of the Age (AS) is concealed from the public eye, his existence gives birth to blessings to the world;<sup>1</sup> he is the intermediary between Divine Grace and people; he serves as a link between creatures and the Creator; and his existence leads to the stability of the earth and the heavens and also survival of creatures in the world.

The Prayer of 'Adila<sup>2</sup> reads, "The world will survive through his survival, through his blessing all creatures are provided for, and it is through his existence that the heavens and the earth survive."<sup>3</sup>

Although Imam of the Age (AS) is concealed from public eye, but his guardianship is reflected in the world and he is the Lord of Divine, Absolute Guardianship. The world of genesis is unconditionally obedience to his commands; God has given him a free hand to make any changes by him, and his powerful hand solves seemingly unsolvable problems. He is the refuge and safe haven of the Shi'is and they accordingly turn to him in their

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<sup>1</sup> Historical evidence indicates that the leader of a society or a country, as long as he lives, even if he happens to be on a journey, in exile, or in prison, gives birth to life, development, solidarity, and order in that society, but news of his demise leads to dispersion and despair in his supporters.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. deviation from truth towards falsehood, see *Mafātīḥ al-Janān*.

<sup>3</sup> *Mafātīḥ al-Janān*, p. 138.

disentanglements and invoke him to render them assistance. Imam (AS) is Divine Light in the shadows of the earth. He is the light showing the path to those seeking guidance.

In the Friday prayer, Imam of the Age (AS) is thus invoked, "Greetings to you, O Divine Light! Seekers of the path of guidance find their path in your light and receive guidance." Imam Sajjād (AS) said to Abū Khālid Kābulī, "By God, O Abū Khālid! Imam's (AS) light in the hearts of believers is more brilliant than the shining sun during the day. By God! The light illuminates believers' hearts."<sup>1</sup>

During his occultation, Imam of the Age (AS) intuitively guides those who seek guidance and thus illuminates their hearts through his light.

"Similar to the shining sun shrouded by clouds,  
Our Imam of the Age (AS) is concealed and evident.  
In the garden of guidance and intuitive knowledge,  
Our Imam of the Age rejuvenates like spring."

Imam of the Age (AS) prays for his followers in his occultation and thus grants them peace of mind. He answers the prayers of his followers and thereby their prayers are being answered through his Amen. He is the pole of the world of existence, the pivot of being, the secret of creation, light of Divine Glory and Splendor, and the Divinely appointed guardian whose guardianship is like that of God. Creatures receive their sustenance through his bountiful hands. Angels and the Spirit join his holy audience submitting preordainments of the world. It is only through his decree and permission that angels set foot in the sky. He is the guardian of the earth, time, jinn, men, planets, galaxies, creatures, and all the worlds of existence. They all spring from his esoteric exalted states and are not in contradiction to his occultation.

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 23, p. 308.

The Imam's (AS) is never divested of his absolute guardianship. Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS) may be divested of his mundane office, namely leadership of the community, through tyrannical measures and force him to stay at home, but he is simultaneously the Lord of Guardianship and sovereign over all the world of existence.

- d. The emanation of the sun is universal, shining over the world, even into homes, but to the extent that a window is opened. If one intends to expose his heart to Imam's light, he has to open the windows of his heart to him. Nonetheless, one who has turned his heart upside down or has made impediments, the sun may not shine onto it. So, we may avail ourselves of Imam's (AS) light of guidance to the extent that we removed the obstacles.
- e. The sun at times shines through scattered clouds, but it may only be seen by some people. The Imam in occultation (AS) may at times leave occultation and manifest himself to some people.

#### Q.4. Is there any precedence for occultation of Friends of God?

A. Yes, some Prophets (AS) and Friends of God were in prolonged or brief periods of occultation, as attested in the Holy Qur'an. For instance, Moses (AS), son of 'Imrān, was concealed from the Children of Israel for years and they were captives of the pharaoh until God answered the prayer of those poor people and made Prophet Moses (AS) return to his homeland to save them. The account of his flight, return, and concealment from pharaoh is attested in the Holy Qur'an.

Khidr (AS) had concealed himself a long time before Moses (AS) and leads his concealed life to the present. His encounter with Prophet Moses (AS) is attested in the Holy Qur'an.

Prophet Joseph (AS) also led a concealed life for years and his father and brothers had no news of him. His brothers met him several times and conversed with him when he had become the king of Egypt, though they did not know that he

was the lost Joseph (AS) until he introduced himself. A chapter is entirely devoted to Joseph (AS) in the Holy Qur'an recounting his biographical account and the story of his being lost.

Prophet Jonah (AS), after calling his people to monotheism for a long time, was disappointed and was concealed from their eyes. God Almighty kept him 'Alive in the stomach of a whale until He delivered him from his prison and restored him to his people.

The above include some instances of Prophets (AS) who went into occultation and according to some traditions, the occultation of the Imam of the Age (AS) is a tradition handed down to him from the Prophets (AS).

Abū Baṣīr narrates from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) as saying, "Verily, Prophets' traditions including their occultation will precisely apply to the Riser who will rise from among us, the *Ahl al-Bayt*."<sup>1</sup> 'Abd Allah ibn Sinān also narrates from Imam Ṣādiq (AS), saying, "There is a tradition of Moses (AS) son of 'Imrān applicable to the Riser (AS). When I inquired about it, he said, 'concealment of his birth and that of himself from his people.'"<sup>2</sup>

### Prolonged Lifetime

Q.5. Another age old question regarding the Imam of the Time (AS) is the possibility of leading such prolonged life. It is common knowledge that man's lifetime ranges between 70 and 100, but a lifetime exceeding a thousand years is against human experience. Nonetheless, it should be said that one may not conclude that people ordinarily die at the age of seventy, since when we learn that a person lived for 150 or 200 years the former hypothesis will be inv'Alidated. Therefore, one may not determine a specific limit for a natural lifetime.

Bernard Shaw says that based on a scientific principle

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 146, tradition 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 216, tradition 2.

acknowledged by all biologists one may not specify a limit for man's lifetime. <sup>1</sup> The question of lifetime is still discussed as a theory today. What is considered as theory is possible. It is common knowledge that if man succeeds in finding a solution to hardening of the arteries (arteriosclerosis) and maintain normal blood circulation, there would be no impediment to lifetime. Scientists strive to find solutions to overcome age and make prolonged life possible and their efforts reflect the possibility of such phenomenon.

Secondly, in case one rejects the scientific prolongation of lifetime, one may argue that God has inv'Alidated such law of nature in the holy being whom He has preserved for establishment of universal just state, in the same manner that he inv'Alidated the natural law of burning of fire for the sake of Prophet Abraham (AS) by saying, "O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham" (21:69). Prophet Abraham left the enormous pile set ablaze unharmed, since it was Divine Will and Divine Will overcomes all natural laws. Effects of all causes are dependent on His Will and if He wills otherwise, causes may not have any effect.

Regarding Prophet Jonah (AS), the Holy Qur'an (37:143-144) says, "Had he not been of those glorifying [Allah], he would have verily remained inside the stomach [of the fish] until the Day of Resurrection." The blessed Verse is saying that had Jonah (AS) not been one of those who glorify Allah, He would have willed that he remain in the stomach of the fish till the Day of Resurrection, which is inconsistent with all natural laws.

Thirdly, Imam Mahdī (AS) is not the only being enjoying a prolonged lifetime. Regarding Prophet Noah the Holy Qur'an (29:14) says, "Verily We sent Noah to his people and he lived among them for 950 years." It is said that his prophetic mission took 950 years and as reflected in some traditions he lived for 2450 years. <sup>2</sup> Imam 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn is reported as

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<sup>1</sup> *Nigīn-i Āfarīnīsh*, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 11, pp. 285, 287; *Kamāl al-Dīn*, vol. 2, p. 309, tradition 3, chapter 36.

saying, "There is a tradition of Prophets Adam (AS) and Noah (AS) applicable to the Riser, namely the prolonged lifetime of that noble Imam."<sup>1</sup>

Scholars and historians following divinely revealed religions have recorded that Prophet Adam (AS) lived about one thousand years. Prophet Khidr has also lived a prolonged life and it is reflected in some traditions that his long life serves to substantiate that of Imam Mahdī (AS). It is reported from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) as saying, "God Almighty prolong the lifetime of Khidr, His pious servant, neither for the sake of his appointment to prophethood nor for reve'Aling any Scripture to him, nor any religion to abrogate former religions, nor an imamate Whose servants be obliged to follow him, nor any obedience obliging his followers to obey him, but He prolonged the lifetime of his pious servant, Prophet Khidr (AS) in order to prove Imam Mahdī's (AS) long life, since He was All-Aware that He would ordain a prolonged lifetime during Imam Mahdī's (AS) occultation and was Fully-Aware of His servants' denial of his long life.

In other words, in case opponents ask, "How is it that Imam Mahdī (AS) enjoys such a long life?" it may be replied that Prophet Khidr (AS) lived a longer life. Thus, the argument of deniers may be inv'Alidated and there remain no argument for people to deny his prolonged lifetime.<sup>2</sup>

Elijah (AS) is another prophet enjoying a long life. These two Prophets (AS) annually meet in the due season.<sup>3</sup>

In his invaluable book, 'Allāma Majlisī has devoted a chapter on the accounts of people leading a long life. Their accounts and some words and poems narrated from them are to be found in the said chapter. For the sake of brevity, mention will only be made below of some of their names and

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 217, tradition 4; *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 1, p. 136, tradition 183.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 222, under tradition 9; *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 1, p. 250, tradition 439.

<sup>3</sup> *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 1, p. 255, tradition 443.

the years of their lifetime.

‘Ūj ibn ‘Unnāq: 3600  
Luqmān ibn ‘Ad: 3500  
Daḥḥāk: 1000  
‘Amr ibn ‘Āmir ibn Muzayqiyā: 800  
Hubal ibn ‘Abd Allah: 600  
Duwayd ibn Zayd: 450  
‘Amr ibn Ḥamamma Dawsī: 400  
Aktham ibn Ṣayfī Asadī: 360  
‘Abd al-Masīḥ ibn Baqīla: 350  
Mustawghir ibn Rabi’a: 330  
‘Awf ibn Kināna: 300  
Zuhayr ibn Janāb: 300  
‘Abīd ibn Abraṣ: 300  
Ṣafī ibn Riyāḥ ibn Aktham: 276  
Ṣayfī ibn Riyāḥ: 270  
Muḥṣin ibn ‘Itbān: 250  
Rabī’ ibn Ḍay’ ibn Wahb: 240  
Ḍubayra ibn Sa’īd: 220  
Ya’urub ibn Qaḥṭān: 200  
Durayd ibn Ṣimma: 200  
Sayf ibn Wahb: 200  
Tha’laba ibn Ka’b: 200  
Suwayd ibn Ḥadhdhāq: 200  
Naṣr ibn Dahmān: 190  
Ḥārith ibn Ka’b: 160  
Abū Ṭiḥmān: 150  
Shurayḥ ibn Hānī: 120

People with prolonged lifetime include Salmān, the Persian, who is reported by the majority of Muslim and non-Muslim scholars to have been contemporaneous with Prophet Jesus (AS) and the Prophet of the Islamic faith (SAW).

Fourthly, what was mentioned above regarding justification of the natural life of the Imam of the Time (AS) is not needed by the people of intuitive knowledge, since they know that the Imam of the Time (AS) is the Lord of universal



guardianship, serving as the guardian of all of us, next to Allah. He is the guardian of the world of contingency and nothing lies beyond the world of contingency. In other words, he is not overcome by time, but he lords over time. He may not be affected by time and such attribute, besides being attested in traditions, is reflected in the titles the Imam of the Time and the Lord of the Time. He is the Imam of the Time, the Lord of the Time, and beyond Time. The attribute the Commander of the Age signifies that he is the Lord of the Age and Age is hereby employed in the sense of time.

One may raise a question here: How is it that other Pure Imams (AS) lack such attribute and they were subject to time. The reply would be that being affected by time was dependent upon their own leave. They also possessed such power and guardianship and were able to render the passage of time ineffectual, but they opted for being subject to the passage of time. In brief, Imam's (AS) will overcome nature and all natural laws.



## Section 3

### The Shī'ī Being Granted Audience with the Imam of the Age (AS)

Would it be possible to be granted audience in the period of occultation?

Most frequently raised questions include the possibility of meeting with the Divine Argument during his occultation. It was mentioned above regarding the meaning of occultation that it does not connote not meeting with the Imam in occultation (AS) but not knowing him. In this vein, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, "They see the Imam of the Age (AS), but they do not recognize him." So, there is no doubt about the possibility of meeting with him, as it is attested in traditions.

It is also asked whether it is possible to meet with and recognize him. The answer would be that if he wills to be recognized it would be possible to do likewise. Prophet Joseph's (AS) brothers failed to recognize him, but when he willed to be recognized, he introduced himself and they recognized him.

Another question is raised regarding a passage from the noble epistle of the Imam of the Age (AS), according to which: "Some people will come to the Shī'ī before long claiming to have met with the Imam. Behold that such claims made before the arrival of Sufyānī and the outcry heard from the heavens would be those of pretenders and liars."<sup>1</sup> As mentioned by our notable scholars, like Majlisī and Shakh Ḥurr 'Āmilī, the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 361, tradition 7, vol. 52, p. 151, tradition 1 which includes "Some people from among my followers will come ..."

passage inv'Alīdates claims accompanied by deputyship, namely those made by people who claim to serve as special deputies of the Imam of the Age (AS) and their ability to meet with the Lord of the Age (AS) like the four deputies. In the opening section of the epistle, the Imam of the Age (AS) orders his fourth special deputy, namely 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Samurī, not to introduce anyone as his successor, since the gate to deputyship is closed.

Then, it is said, "Whoever claims to have met with me prior to Sufyānī's advent is a liar." It goes without saying that by such meetings, those of special deputies, e. g. 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Samurī, is intended. Thus, such tradition does not include meeting with the Imam (AS) without claim to deputyship and there is no reason to inv'Alīdate meeting with the Imam (AS).

Secondly, had there been no possibility of meeting with the noble Imam (AS), there would have been no command to pray for meeting with him. Thirdly, had it been impossible to be granted the honor of meeting with him, there would have been in instructions as to meeting with him. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, "It is incumbent on everyone to pray after establishing his obligatory prayers so that he may meet with the noble Ḥujjat ibn al-Ḥasan in sleep or wakefulness and the prayer is as follows: "In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate. O Lord! Our master imparted to us ..."<sup>1</sup>

It is also narrated that whoever recites the prayer after having established his obligatory prayers, his lifetime will be prolonged and he will meet with the noble Lord of Command. The prayer is as follows: "O Lord! Salute Muḥammad and his house! O Lord! Verily, Your Messenger is truthful and certifier."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 86, p. 61, tradition 69; *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 2, p. 8, tradition 1044.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 86, p. 7, tradition 7; *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 2, p. 10, tradition 1045. The author of *Mikyāl al-Makārim* says, "I took special care

Fourthly, the most decisive proof for the possibility of anything is its occurrence. Many people have had the great honor of meeting with the Imam (AS) since the outset of his occultation and the accounts of such meetings have been recorded in related sources. Some notable scholars have even composed books in this respect, instance of which include *Tabṣīrat al-Walī fīman Ra'ā 'l-Mahdī* by the erudite scholar Sayyid Hāshim Baḥrānī, and *Jannat al-Ma'wā* by the erudite scholar Ḥājj Mīrzā Ḥusayn Nūrī. Such accounts have been recurrently narrated and they are not open to doubt.

Fifthly, it must be said that it is an obligation of ours to be in contact with the Imam of the Age (AS) during the noble Imam's (AS) occultation. Regarding the exegesis of the Qur'anic verse (3:200) "O you who believe! Be steadfast and enjoin each other to exercise fortitude and be in contact with each other," it is narrated from Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS), on the authority of Shaykh Mufīd as saying, "Exercise fortitude in afflictions and enjoin each other to persevere in maintaining religion and stay in contact with your Imam of the Age."<sup>1</sup>

There are some degrees to such contact, including: 1. Contact by heart through which heart and soul are fully attentive towards the Imam of the Age (AS) and the person thinks of him. 2. Meeting in person when the awaited succeed to meet with their master. 3. Meeting leading to union with him.

It may be asked what strengthens the contact between the awaited and his Imam of the Age (AS). The answer to the question is provided in a passage from a noble epistle of his addressed to Shaykh Mufīd, "It is incumbent upon you to act upon what leads to affection for us and abstain from what

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to recite the prayer since my adolescence and succeeded in having the honor of meeting with the noble Imam (AS) in sleep and obtained bounties in abundance by such meeting.' For further details about the manner of this meeting, see *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 1, p. 458.

<sup>1</sup> *Ikkhiṣṣāṣ*, p. 142; *Ma'ānī al-Akhhbār*, p. 369, tradition 1.

he said was unfounded: "Amassing wealth, leading weak believers to perplexity,<sup>1</sup> and severance of ties have led you to misfortune and impeded you from availing yourself of the grace."<sup>2</sup> The son of Mahziyār said, "Repentance, Repentance!"

Mention is made of this point in the noble epistle of the Imam (AS) addressed to Shaykh Mufid: "Nothing impedes the Shī'ī from meeting with us but what is imparted to us concerning their misdeeds, though we expect otherwise."

"I asked, 'What is it that your moon-like countenance is concealed from us?'

He said, "You are the veil, though my countenance is visible."

Such veil should be cast aside. It may be ignorance; unbelief; lack of severance, in that the seeker has not severed his ties with others and his interests still lord over him; not purging the self from impurities; moral vices, serving as shackles and fetters impeding him from soaring towards the realm of his Beloved; not purifying one's love, since he has not been able to drive away his love for others from his heart, as love for mammon serves as an obstacle on the way leading to the Beloved.

Those who have been able to cast away such dark veils have found their way to the mine of light and have attained the luminous presence of the Divine Light in the shadows of the earth. Narrating the accounts of the honor bestowed on such notables by meeting the Imam (AS) may be quite constructive bearing significant educational impacts on people. These anecdotes include accounts of the grace bestowed upon the friends and followers of the Remainder of God Almighty reflecting his affection for them.

They invigorate our hearts and souls proving that how the Imam of the Age (AS) remembers his friends at all times. They make us keep our hopes high to be granted the honor of

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<sup>1</sup> *taḥayyartum*, it may also be read *tajabbartum* "You oppressed [weak believers]."

<sup>2</sup> *Dalā'il al-Imāma*, p. 541, *Tabṣirat al-Walī*, anecdote 46.

meeting with him and further strengthen our belief in the holy presence of the Imam of the Age (AS). They teach us the secrets of being granted such honor, reminding us of the manners of attainment of such grace. The least merit of such anecdotes is that we remember the noble Imam (AS) at all times and the remembrance of the Argument of God may entail blessings and be one of our best prayers. Some instructive anecdotes of a similar nature will be recounted below.

### a. The Honor Bestowed upon Ḥājī ‘Alī Baghdādī

He is reported as saying, "Some of Imam's (AS) possessions had been entrusted with me. I made up my mind to leave them with the religious scholars of Najaf and collect my claims from the merchants of the city. First, I went to the Shrine of the Command of the Faithful; then, I proceeded to collect some of my claims. I paid the amount to some of the religious scholars, but I failed to pay the due amount in full and I still owed 20 tomans. I thought I had better pay the due amount to a religious scholar in Kāzīmayn.

"I returned to Baghdad and I was willing to settle the due amount, but I had no cash. I went to the holy shrines of the noble Imams Musā ibn Ja'far (AS) and Jawād al-A'imma (AS) on Tuesday; then, I visited Ayatollah Āl Yāsīn, a religious authority in the city. I informed him of my financial obligation to Imam (AS) and requested him to allow me to pay the outstanding amount in installments by drafts. It was early evening when I set out for Baghdad on foot, since I could not afford a mount. I had completed half of the way that I saw a magnificent *Sayyid* traveling to Kāzīmayn. I greeted him and he replied, addressing me by my name, inquiring: 'What is it that you didn't stay tonight in Kāzīmayn?'

"I replied, 'I have an important matter requiring my attention. So I had to leave.' He said, 'Return with me and stay the night there. Tomorrow, God willingly, you'll leave to attend to your matter.' Having been impressed by his words, I returned with him. We passed along a river under verdant trees whose branches descended upon us. The weather was lovely,

though I was too preoccupied to think about such things.

"It crossed my mind that the *Sayyid* addressed me by my name, though he did not know me. My justification was that he knew me, but I have forgotten. Again, it crossed my mind that the *Sayyid*, being a descendant of the Messenger of God (SAW), expects me to pay him some money. I said to him, 'I'm still financially obliged to you, but I obtained the permission from such and such *Shaykh* to settle it later.' He smilingly said, 'Aye, you settled some of the amount due to our deputies in Najaf.' I inquired whether what I had already paid was sufficient. He said, "Aye." I became curious about his identity. Who was that *Sayyid* who called eminent religious scholars of Najaf as "our deputies"? I satisfied myself by considering that religious scholars are deputies in receiving what is due to the *Sayyids* and once more I neglected the truth.

"Then, I raised another question, "My master! Scholars quote a tradition while mourning the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (AS), based on which a person sees a litter between the earth and the heaven. Inquiring about the passenger, he is told that Ladies Fāṭima Zahrā (SA) and Khadīja Kubrā (SA) occupy the litter. He inquires about their destination and is told that they go to pilgrimage to the Shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (AS) Tuesdays in the evening. Then, he notices that pieces of paper are being cast out of the litter and the pieces bear the inscription "safe conduct for pilgrims visiting Imam Ḥusayn (AS) on Tuesday in the evening" and thinks about the authenticity of the dictum.

"He said, 'Aye, visiting the Shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (AS) on Tuesday in the evening delivers pilgrims from the Fire on the Day of Resurrection.' I accompanied him to the holy yard; then, we entered the holy garden through the gate known as "Gate of Wish" (*bāb al-murād*). He did not stop under the stoic and did not recite anything, but entered. He stopped below the tomb of the noble Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (AS). I stood beside him, inquiring, "O master! Recite the prayers and I'll accompany you.' He began his recitation, saying, "Greetings unto you, O Messenger of God! Greetings unto you, O



Commander of the Faithful! And enumerated the Imams to Imam 'Askarī (AS). Then, he turned towards me and smilingly said, "When you greet Imam 'Askarī (AS), how would you continue?" I replied, 'I would say 'Greetings onto you o Divine Argument, Lord of the Time!'

"Then, he entered the Luminous Garden (*Rawḍat al-Munawwara*) and stood beside the luminous tomb of the noble Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (AS). I stood beside him, inquiring, 'O master! Recite your prayers so that I may accompany you.' He began his recitation of Pilgrimage Prayer of the Trustee of God (*Ziyārat Amīn Allah*) which is one of the Pilgrimage Prayers of *Jāmi'a*. Then, he entered the second tomb, that of Muḥammad ibn 'Alī (AS) and established his prayers. As a token of veneration, I stood behind him and began reading the pilgrimage prayers during which I thought I had better ask the gentleman whether he would stay there at night bestowing the honor of entertainment. I looked towards the place where he used to stand, but I did not see him.

"I made the prayers brief and looked at all pilgrims one by one in quest for him. I visited every nook and cranny, but I failed to find any trace of him. It was as if I regained my consciousness and asked myself about the identity of that *Sayyid* who had addressed me by my name and had talked to me about my payment of some of the amount due to him to his deputies in the noble city of Najaf. He was the gentleman whom I accompanied and passed along a river under verdant trees, despite the fact that there had never been such a river and trees on route to Baghdad. Further signs were also significant all leading to certitude that He was the noble Imam Mahdī (AS). That was why when we greeted all the pure *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) enumerating to Imam 'Askarī (AS), he turned to me and inquired about what I would do then and I answered: 'Greetings onto you o Divine Argument or Lord of the Time. Then, he smiled, entered the holy garden and disappeared of a sudden.'"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 53, p. 31, anecdote 59.

The anecdote abounds in instructive points, but what is further evident is Ḥājj ‘Alī Baghdādī’s attentiveness towards settlement of financial obligations. Thus, we may accord particular attention to our financial obligations against the noble Imam and abstain from using unlawful means and thereby fill our stomachs with fire. The Imam of the Age (AS) in reply to questions raised by Asadī, recorded in his noble epistle, says, “Whoever unduly uses our possessions will fill his stomach with fire and will before long ensnared in blazing fire.”

Payment of the one-fifth religious tax (*khums*) is a Divine Obligation clearly referred to in the Holy Qur’an (8:41). One may not use a possession prior to payment of the one-fifth tax. A group of people from Khurasan went to the noble Imam Riḍā (AS), inquiring him to render them exempted from payment of the one-fifth tax. The noble Imam (AS) replied, “It will not be made lawful to any of you [to evade from its payment].”

Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, on whom many honors of visiting the Imam (AS) was bestowed, in his *Kitāb al-Iqbāl*, devote to etiquette of fasting in the month of Ramaḍān, under the section on the lawfulness of what the person taking fast should consume, particularly for breaking his fast in the evening, said, “I always follow the custom of paying the one-fifth (*khums*) and the one-tenth (*zakāh*) of whatever property falling into my possession, so that if such taxes have not been paid for it, it becomes pure and lawful and in case they have been already paid, it is recommended to expend in the path of God.”<sup>1</sup>

#### **b. The Honor Bestowed upon Shaykh Ḥasan Kāẓimaynī**

It was on his schedule to devote his Fridays to the Imam of the Age (AS) when he performed major ablution (*ghusl*), awaited in pilgrimage garb (*iḥrām*), wearing a sheathed sword,

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawrān-i Bā-shukūh-i Zuhūr*, p. 100.

abstaining from performing any transaction, occupying himself with recitation of prayers in his work place.

He said, "While I was engaged in recitation of prayers one Friday, I saw three eminent *Sayyids* from afar approaching us. Their luminous and attractive faces attract my full attention.

I wished that they visited my shop. They came to my shop. I greeted them and they greeted me back, inquiring whether I had some medicine. Although I did not cut deals on Fridays, I immediately said that I did have the medicine. I went to the rear to fetch it, but when I returned I noticed that they were gone, leaving behind a walking stick. I kissed it and placed it at the rear. I came out inquiring the people around about them, but they said that they had not seen anyone.

"I returned to the shop unhappily and seated myself in my usual place, regretting that I failed to know them. Then, I noticed an ailing man who was apparently being taken to the Holy Shrine of the noble Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (AS) for cure. I called and asked them to give them the medicine. They brought the patient and placed him on a couch. I performed a two *rak'a* prayer. Then, I took the walking stick and placed it on the patient's body. He arose and walked on his own feet. I noticed that they had left some money for me. I took it and followed them to return the money, but I noticed that the stick was not in its place. I became upset and left the shop. ...

"I had saved 24 silver coins which I took home and told my family that I was going to the holy city of Mashhad and if they wished they could accompany me. We went on pilgrimage to the Holy Shrine of Imam Riqā (AS). I bought some rosaries and began selling them on a platform beside the holy shrine. I expressed by strong affection for *Sayyids*, inquiring them about his beloved, the Imam of the Age (AS).

"I entered the holy tomb one day and saw that a *Sayyid* was standing beside the mausoleum bursting into tears. I patted him on the shoulder, saying, "What is it that you are in tears?" He replied, 'I cannot afford to pay for my sustenance expenses.' I suggested, 'would you cut a deal with me?' He said, 'I say that I have nothing on me and you make such

suggestion?' I said, 'I believe that you are a *Sayyid* and you own a house in Paradise. Would you sell it to me?' He replied, 'I don't know about such house, but if you believe so, I'm willing to sell it.'

"He found a piece of paper and wrote on it: 'Witnessed by the noble Imam Riḍā (AS), the just witness, I sell the house which I own, as believed by this person, to him against 41 silver coins.' I said, 'Say: 'I sold [it].'' He did likewise and I also said, 'I bought' and I handed him the money. It was the money I had saved to buy a house for my family. I took the piece of paper and returned home.

"When my daughter inquired about the house, I replied, 'I bought a house in whose garden rivers flow and its verdant trees are heavy with all kinds of fruit.' They became happy, saying, 'Take us to the house so that we may see it.' I said, 'You will come and see. It is located among the houses of the Seal of the Prophets (SAW), Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS), the Commander of the Faithful (AS), Imam Ḥasan (AS), and Imam Ḥusayn (AS).' Then, they noticed what I had done.

After a while, once I was seated on a platform beside the shrine yard when I noticed a gentleman approaching. I greeted him and he saluted back, addressing me by my name, 'O Shaykh Ḥasan! Your master, the Imam of the Age (AS) is inquiring what you expect him to do for you, since you always inquire *Sayyids* about him.' I took the lap of his garment, saying, 'May I be your sacrifice! Are you the Imam of the Age (AS)?' He replied, 'No, I'm his emissary.' Then, he took my hand and took me to a corner of the yard and told me some signs that nobody was aware of them. Then, he said, 'Now tell me what you want.' I said, 'I have only some questions to ask. Will I be gone a believer? Am I one of the adherents of the Imam of the Age (AS)? Is the deal made with that *Sayyid* v'Alid? When will I leave this world?' He bid me farewell and left.

"After a few days, I had the honor to meet him again. He said, 'I remembered you to your master and he saluted you, saying, 'You will leave this world a believer. You are one of our adherents. The transaction you did with that *Sayyid* is

absolutely v'Alid. But, regarding the time of your death, you will have a dream in the middle of a week that two pieces of paper will descend on you from heaven on one it is written: 'There is no god but Allah and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God' and on the other: "Alī is the true, true friend of God" and you will die on the Friday of that week at daybreak.'

The narrator of the anecdote, Sayyid Taqī, said, 'I saw Shaykh Ḥasan one day leaving the Holy Shrine of Imam Riḍā (AS) heading homeward quite happily. I said to him, 'I see that you are very happy today!' He said, 'I'll be only your guest this week. Show me your hospit'Ality in any manner deemed fit by you.' He was awake at night and fasted in the day. He spent all his time praying and invoking God at all times at the Holy Shrine and at home. Having returned home on Thursday in the evening, he asked me to ask his family to come to him. He said a few words; then, he asked for their forgiveness, saying, 'Separation is approaching and it is the last night I'm with you. You won't see me before long.' Then, he bid them farewell, asking them to depart, saying, 'I invoke God to take care of you.' When his family had departed, he turned to me, saying, 'Mr. Sayyid Taqī! Don't leave me tonight. Rest for a while, but rise early.'

Sayyid Taqī said, "I could not sleep, but kept an eye on him all night. I noticed that he was happy, praying at all times. I rose early, saying, 'You are tired. Rest for a while.' Smilingly he said, 'The time of rest is approaching me. Although I have made my testament, but I reiterate it, 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah; I bear witness that indeed Muḥammad is the Messenger of God (AS); and I bear witness that 'Alī and his infallible descendants are Divine Arguments. Death is right. Questions to be posed by the angels of death (*Nakīr wa Munkar*) are right. God shall resurrect the dead from the graves. I believe that Resurrection is right and the Bridge Spanning Hellfire (*ṣirāt*) and Divine Scale (*mīzān*) are right. I do not owe money to anyone, not even one single dirham. There has never been any lapse in my establishment of prayers or my fasting. I do not owe once single dirham for any wrong

done to God's servants. I have not left you anything, but tow liras which are in my vest pocket, saved for the expenses of the undertaker, my burial, and a small funeral service. I bid you all farewell in God's Care. Do not talk to me any longer. Bury with me what is in my shroud. Put the piece of paper which I took from the *Sayyid* in my shroud. Greetings be on those who follow the True Path."

"Then, he engaged himself in recitation of prayers and established his night prayer, as usual. Having established his supererogatory prayers, he sat on his prayer mat, as if he was expecting death. I noticed, of a sudden, that he rose up and greeted with somebody in utmost humbleness. I counted; he arose thirteen times and welcomed newcomers. I saw of a sudden that he rushed towards the door like a bird soaring in the sky, shouting from the bottom of his heart, 'O Master! O Lord of the Time!' he placed his face at the threshold for a while. I rose up and took his arm as he was in tears. I asked him, 'What is seems to be the problem?' He replied, 'Keep silent.' Then, he said in Arabic, 'The Fourteen Noble Luminaries (AS) are all present here.' I said to myself that he imagined them out of his passionate love for the Fourteen Infallibles (AS). I could not imagine that he was in his last breath of life and those noble infallibles were really present. He seemed to be in the best of health and what he uttered was right.

I noticed before long that he smiled, moved, and repeated three times, 'Welcome o Recipient of Souls [Angel of Death]!' then, he placed his arms on his chest, turned his face around the room, asking, 'Greetings onto you, o Messenger of God! Would you give me the permission?' Then, he said, 'Greetings onto you, o Commander of the Faithful! Would you allow me?' Then, he greeted with all the Fourteen Pure Luminaries and requested permission, saying: 'I ask for your grace.' The, he lay down towards direction to Mecca (*qibla*), saying three times, 'O God! By these Fourteen Holy Luminaries!' Then, he pulled the bed cloth on his face and placed his hands on his sides. When I pushed back the cloth, I noticed that he had

passed away.”<sup>1</sup>

If we accord attention to the testament of Shaykh Ḥasan who awaited the arrival of the Imam of the Age (AS), we find these sentences among others: “I do not owe once single dirham for any wrong done to God’s servants”; in other words, he did not trample the rights of no single servant of God and he owed nobody even one single dirham. Could we claim the same? He said that he had not lapse in establishment of even one single *rak‘a* of his obligatory prayers, reflecting the particular significance he accorded to proper performance of his prayers. Do we accord the same attention to our prayers? The fruit of such pure and God pleasing lifetime is reflected in his last breath: the Fourteen Holy Luminaries gathered around his deathbed. Could anyone imagine something better than that? He lived and died in happiness.

### c. The Honor Bestowed upon ‘Allāma Baḥr al-‘Ulūm

‘Allāma Baḥr al-‘Ulūm was a Shī‘ī notable whose meetings with the noble Commander of the Age (AS) has been repeatedly narrated. It is reported that accompanied by some seminaries he departed Karabalā’ to welcome a group beating their chests mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (AS) at Karbalā’. The seminarians of a sudden notice that the outstanding religious authority Sayyid Baḥr al-‘Ulūm was beating his chest like other members of the group. Seminarians accompanying the said prominent scholar strove to impede his venting of pure emotions, though their attempts were of no avail. Finally, a group of seminarians gather around him unless he may be hurt in the effervescent crowd. After the event, some special companions of his inquire about his participation in beating his chest among the group and his mourning in that manner.

He replied, “When I met the group, I noticed that the

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<sup>1</sup> *‘Ināyāt-i Ḥadrat-i Mahdī ‘alayhi ‘l-Salām bih ‘Ulamā’ va Ṭullāb*, p. 353; *Ḥudūr dar Dawlat-i Karīmīh*, p. 161.

Remainder of God (AS) was beating his chest, mourning with bare foot and head. I could not maintain my composure and joined the group and mourned beside the noble Imam (AS). The meeting clearly reflects the significance of mourning for Imam Husayn (AS) and we may take a significant lesson based on which our exalted position should not impede our mourning for Imam Husayn (AS). One has to sacrifice all his position for the sake of mourning for Imam Husayn (AS). One has to mourn like a mother who has lost his beloved child, shouting, mourning, and beating one's chest. This is the secret of the survival of our school reflecting the degree of our affection.

“O beloved in whose love multitudes of people are captivated,

Those distraught in your sorrow are happy with their sorrow in their hearts.

Whoever bought sorrow for your sake sold out happiness in the world,

Those aware of your sorrow are unaware of mundane affairs.”



## Section 4

### Shī'ī Obligations during the Occultation of the Imam of the Age (AS)

#### 1. Recognition of Imam (AS)

Our obligations during the period of occultation include recognition of Imam (AS), since it leads to deliverance from error. The Commander of the Faithful (AS) is reported as saying, "The least thing leading to error is that one does not recognize the Divine Argument in the earth and the witness of God Almighty over people." All instances of ignorance and loss stem from failing to recognize the Imam (AS). Without recognition of the Imam (AS), one may not find the path leading to further knowledge. It is the source of light, illumination, and guidance. It is the key to all bounties and blessings. It is the basis of religiousness and the secret to knowing religion and faith. It equals treading the Straight Path leading to Guidance. So, it is one of the most significant and obligatory questions to which particular significance should be accorded, such that if one dies without recognizing him it is as if he died at the time of pre-Islamic Ignorance.

Relying on his own authority, Nu'mānī narrates from Fudayl ibn Yasār as saying, "I heard from Imam Bāqir (AS) saying, 'One who dies without believing in the Imam, it is as if he has died at the time of pre-Islamic Ignorance. One who dies having recognized his Imam will not be affected by hastening, namely deliverance, or its postponement. Such a person is like one who accompanied the Imam of the Time at his pavilion.'"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 142, tradition 56.

According to another tradition narrated on the authority of Tha'laba ibn Maymūn, "Know your Imam, since if you know him, hastening or postponement of his arrival will not inflict any loss on you. One who knows his Imam and dies prior to his arrival will have a share of the rewards bestowed upon those who accompany the Imam (AS) and stay at his pavilion upon the arrival of the Imam of the Time (AS)."<sup>1</sup>

It is incumbent upon us to know our Imam, namely one appointed as the Divine Argument whose obedience is obligatory to us. If we happen to know him and recognize his attributes and nobilities and appreciate that he may not be substituted by anybody in this world, namely such attributes and nobilities are not to be attested in others, we will opt for his path and thus deliver ourselves from error and safeguard attaining to our goal.

## 2. Obedience

Our obligations during the period of occultation include obedience to Divine Command. If we recognize God as the Absolutely Wise Lord and understand that all his Deeds are based on Wisdom, we may never ask questions regarding His Commands nor shall we protest His Commands by casting doubts on them. We are obliged to be obedience before Divine Argument. If we recognize the Argument of God as an Infallible Imam not exposed to error, possessing the exalted rank of Infallibility and if we understand that obedience to him equals obedience to God and committing sins regarding him equals committing sins before God, we will never disobey him, but we unconditionally obey him and this is the path to deliverance.

The ninth Infallible Imam (AS) is reported as saying, "There shall be a prolonged period of occultation for the noble Imam (AS) ... during which only those obedient to him

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 131, tradition 30.

shall find deliverance.”<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Abstaining from Haste

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) was inquired about the exegesis of the blessed Qur’anic verse (16:1) “Divine Command will come to pass, seek not to hasten it.” He said, “The rise of the Imam is being intended. God Almighty says not to try to hasten it.”<sup>2</sup> The Commander of the Faithful said, “Shattering a mountain would be more convenient than shattering a state and sovereignty whose respite has not come to pass. Invoke God to render you assistance and exercise fortitude. Know that the earth belongs to Allah and He will vest it with any of His servants whom He wills. Divine Ordainment shall certainly come to pass. “Do not seek to hasten the Rise, since such haste will entail regret.”<sup>3</sup>

### 4. Awaiting Arrival

Another Shī‘ī obligation against the Imam of the Time (AS) during his occultation is to await his arrival. Such obligation is reflected in a tradition narrated from His Holiness ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasanī, as recorded by Shaykh Ṣadūq in his *Kamāl al-Dīn*: “I joined audience with my master, the noble Imam Jawād al-A‘imma (AS), intending to inquire about the identity of the Riser. The noble Imam (AS) began by saying, ‘O Abū al-Qāsim! Our riser is Imam Mahdī (AS) awaiting his arrival during his occultation and obedience to him upon his arrival will be obligatory to all. He will be my third son [in line of descent].”<sup>4</sup>

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, “Awaiting his arrival is our religious obligation. Piety, truthfulness, ... and awaiting his arrival are obligatory based on the doctrines of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 157, tradition 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 139, tradition 46.

<sup>3</sup> *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 2, p. 622.

<sup>4</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 156, tradition 1.

the Pure Imams (AS).” According to another tradition, awaiting his arrival is a prerequisite of acceptance of good deeds. Abū Baṣīr narrates from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) as saying, “Do you want me to inform you of the condition of acceptance of your good deeds without which God will not accept any good deed from anyone?” Abū Baṣīr replied, “Aye. O son of the Messenger of God.” The noble Imam (AS) said, “Bearing witness to Divine Unity and prophethood of Muḥammad (SAW), obedience to Divine Command, our guardianship, renunciation of our enemies, submission, piety, making efforts. . . and awaiting the arrival of the Imam of the Age (AS).”<sup>1</sup> The said tradition proceeds to enumerate awaiting for his arrival as one of the prerequisites of being qu’Alified to serve as one of the companions of the Remainder of God (AS), saying, “Whoever wants his name to be recorded on the list of the companions and supporters of the Imam of the Time (AS) and be bestowed such happiness and honor should possess certain qu’Alifications one of which is awaiting for his arrival.”<sup>2</sup>

#### a. Merit of Awaiting His Arrival

Awaiting his arrival is reflected in numerous traditions as the merit par excellence. The Messenger of God (SAW) said, “The best deed of my followers is to await the arrival.”<sup>3</sup> Imam Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī (AS) is reported as saying, “Await the arrival and despair not of Divine Grace, since the most acceptable deeds before God Almighty is to await the arrival.”<sup>4</sup> This merit is reflected in many a tradition as the most significant form of worshipping God. The Messenger of God (SAW) said, “Awaiting the arrival is worshipping [G0d].”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 140, tradition 50.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 128, tradition 21.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 123, tradition 7, p. 122, under tradition 3; *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 2, p. 168, tradition 1222.

<sup>5</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 122, tradition 3.

According to another Prophetic tradition, "Awaiting the arrival is worshipping par excellence."<sup>1</sup>

The awaiting are depicted in many a tradition as those wielding swords fighting for Allah's Cause. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "The person awaiting the arrival is like one wielding his sword fighting before the Messenger of God (SAW), defending him."<sup>2</sup> It is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, "The person awaiting our command and state is like one who falls in his blood in Allah's Cause."<sup>3</sup>

According to some traditions, those awaiting the arrival are regarded as the best of people at any age. In this vein, the noble Imam 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn (AS) said to Abū Khālīd Kābulī: "O Abū Khālīd! The people living at the time of occultation who believe in Imam Mahdī (AS) and await his arrival are the best of people at any time."<sup>4</sup> Based on a tradition, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said to 'Ammār Sābāṭī: "One who dies awaiting the arrival possesses a more exalted rank before God than the martyrs fallen at the Battles of Badr and Uḥud."<sup>5</sup>

Hasan ibn Abū Ḥamza narrates on the authority of his father that the latter said to Imam Ṣādiq (AS): "May I be your sacrifice! I'm advanced in years and weak. My appointed time [of death] is approaching. If fear that I may die without witnessing the establishment of your true state." The noble Imam said, "O Abū Ḥamza! One who believes in us, acknowledges our words, and awaits the arrival is like one who will fall a martyr under the Riser's banner. By God! Such a person will be like one who fell a martyr under the banner of the Messenger of God (SAW)."<sup>6</sup> He is reported as saying in another tradition, "One who awaits the arrival is like one who

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 125, tradition 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 129, tradition 24.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 123, under tradition 7; *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 2, p. 169, tradition 1223.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 122, tradition 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 128, under tradition 20.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, vol. 68, p. 141, tradition 86; *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 2, p. 172, tradition 1234.

accompanies the Imam of the Age (AS) and is present at the noble Imam's (AS) pavilion, but is like one who takes arms under the banner of the Messenger of God (SAW)."<sup>1</sup>

Devotees of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) have from long ago wished for establishment of worldwide just, true state.

Hakam ibn 'Uyayniya says, "I had joined audience with Imam Bāqir (AS) when his home was crowded. An old man with a curved spine, relying on a walking stick appeared of a sudden. First he greeted the Imam (AS) and was greeted by him. Then, he turned to the crowd, greeted them and was greeted in return by them. Then, he turned to Imam Bāqir (AS), saying, 'O son of the Messenger of God (SAW). May I be your sacrifice. Please let me take a seat beside you. By God! I love you and your lovers. By God! My affection for you is not for mundane affairs. Indeed, I regard as enemies and hate those who are your enemies. By God! Such hatred is not personal. By God! I regard as lawful what you regard likewise and regard as unlawful what you regard likewise. I await the arrival. Would there be any hope for me? May God allow me to be your sacrifice.

"Imam Bāqir (AS) called him and seated him beside himself. Then, he said, 'O old man! Somebody came to my father, Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (AS), raising the same question. My father said to him, "If you pass away, you will join audience with the Messenger of God (SAW), Imam Ḥasan (AS), Imam Ḥusayn (AS), and Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (AS). You will be glad in heart and you will meet angels on our deathbed with delight and happiness. If you survive, you will see what will please you and you will be in an exalted state beside us.'

"The old man said, 'What did you say, my master?' Imam (AS) repeated what he had said. The old man said, 'God is Greater. If I die, I will join audience with the Messenger of God (SAW), Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS), Imam Ḥasan (AS), Imam Ḥusayn (AS), and Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (AS) and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 146, tradition 69.

...’ Then, the old man burst into tears and fell down. The audience, witnessing the scene, burst into tears.

“Ima Bāqir (AS) wiped tears with his fingers from the old man’s cheeks. The old man raised his head, saying to Imam Bāqir (AS), ‘O son of the Messenger of God (SAW)! Let me kiss your hands! May God make me your sacrifice!’ Then, he held Imam’s (AS) hands, kissed them, and put them on his eyes and chest. He arose and bid farewell. As he was leaving, Imam Bāqir (AS), looking at him, said to the audience, “He who wishes to see a dweller of Paradise may look at this old man.”<sup>1</sup>

A similar tradition is narrated by Mas’ada, saying, “I had joined audience with Imam Ṣādiq (AS), when a curved old man, relying on his walking stick, entered, greeting the Imam (AS) and was greeted by him. The old man said, ‘O son of the Messenger of God (SAW)! Let me kiss your noble hands! He kissed Imam’s (AS) hands and burst into tears. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) asked him, ‘O old man! Why are you crying?’ He replied, “I’ve been waiting for the arrival of your Riser and establishment of true state for about one hundred years. At the beginning of every month, I say: ‘This is the month when he will arrive.’ At the beginning of every year, I say: ‘This year is that of the arrival of the Riser.’ Now, I’m old and weak, approaching my last days, but I haven’t witnessed the arrival. How should I be not crying when I see that some of you have been exiled and dispersed. Some of you have been martyred out of animosity and hatred.’ His words make Imam (AS) weep. Imam said to him, ‘O old man! If you happen to survive and witness the Riser, you will have a quite exalted state, but if you leave the world awaiting his arrival, you will resurrected along with the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS).”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 46, p. 361, tradition 3; *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 2, p. 173, tradition 1237.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 36, p. 408; *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 2, p. 173, tradition 1236.

## b. Truth of Awaiting and its Meaning

The above reflects some of the nobilities of awaiting as indicated in traditions. Now, a question arises regarding such exalted nobilities of awaiting the arrival among so many good deeds. The answer would be that such nobility is certainly due to the significant and constructive role of awaiting in human life impacting his soul. Awaiting entails raising one's hopes set upon a bright and delightful future, delivering him of stagnation and emptiness.

Awaiting is being alert and the awaiting are those who are in a state of full alert. They are prepared to proceed upon being notified of the Rise, without thinking about requirements in the last minute. They are supposed to proceed without looking back which requires perfection of the soul. They are supposed to sever all mundane ties from their hearts and souls and entertain nothing in their hearts but rendering aid to the Imam of the Age, unimpeded by any passion.

Awaiting is a state of permanent preparedness, since not specific time has been stipulated for the Rise and one has to be prepared for it at any time.

## 5. Praying for Hastening of Arrival

Shi'i obligations during the period of occultation include perseverance in praying for hastening the arrival of the noble Imam (AS). In a noble epistle of his addressed to Ishāq ibn Ya'qūb dispatched by Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, the holy Imam (AS) said: "Pray a lot for hastening the arrival, since it will be your own deliverance."<sup>1</sup>

In his luminous epistle, Imam Mahdī (AS) has vested his supporters with a significant obligation, emphasized it by the imperative verbal form "do a lot" (*akthurū*), denoting that it will entail your own deliverance. Although numerous traditions have been narrated regarding praying for hastening of arrival, this single instruction would suffice to remind the

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 53, p. 181, under tradition 10.



supporters of the Imam of the Age (AS) to accord further significance to this vital matter.

Had the supporters of the Imam of the Age (AS) been able to appreciate the momentous significance of arrival and the invaluable impacts of such immense development on the world of existence, they would have certainly invoked God Almighty with further vehemence, mournfully seeking the arrival of the noble Imam (AS). If they could appreciate that what heavy losses they have incurred during the period of his occultation, having been deprived of such grace and blessing, they would accord further attention to such momentous matter.<sup>1</sup>

## 6. Fortitude against Hardships and Harms Caused by Enemies

Shi'i obligations during the period of occultation include fortitude against hardships. It is hard to maintain faith in the age of occultation. It is hard to lead a pious life. It is hard to gain lawful property at the time of occultation. It is incumbent upon the awaiting to endure such hardships and maintain faith despite so many vicissitudes. It is hard to remain god fearing and abstain from the unlawful. Enduring such hardships certainly entails many a reward.

The Messenger of God (SAW) said, "There will be a time when ... property and wealth may not be gained but through robbing others of their possessions and niggardliness, when people's affection may not be gained but through losing faith and following concupiscent desires; namely one has to follow their desires to please them, even if it may be inconsistent with one's faith. One who witnesses that time and exercise fortitude in indigence, despite having the power to amass [unlawful] wealth, and be patient despite being subject to public hatred, despite being able to gain popularity [through losing one's

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<sup>1</sup> For further details, see the invaluable book *Mikyal al-Makārim*, vol. 2, pp. 221-236.

faith], and remain patient in humility, in spite of being able to be popular and prestigious, God Almighty will grant him the rewards of fifty pious people truly believing in Him.”<sup>1</sup>

There are many ups and down on the path of God and the Imam of the Age (AS), undesirable to man. One may not attain to Paradise through leading a life of pleasure, but there are many bitter impediments and deprivations on that path. One may be subject to ridicule, be called a reactionary and backward. One may be repelled by others. Therefore, one has to persevere on this path, exercise fortitude in maintaining one's faith without abandoning one's faith. One has to know that enduring such hardships entail sweet fruits, namely satisfaction of God and the Imam of the Age (AS).

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, “One who awaits our arrival and endures the harms and fears will be resurrected with the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) on the Day of Resurrection.”<sup>2</sup> Imam Ḥusayn, (AS), the Lord of Martyrs, is reported as saying, “There will be a period of occultation for him during which some believers turn away from their religion and some others maintain their faith, despite hardships, and it will be said to them, ‘When will such promise be fulfilled, if you are truthful?’ One who endures harms and denials during the occultation of the noble Imam (AS) will be like one who fought wielding his sword beside the Messenger of God (SAW).”<sup>3</sup>

## 7. Fortitude in Supporting the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS)

Belief in the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) and renunciation of their enemies constitute two main pillars of religion weakening which results in the collapse of religious foundation. It is incumbent upon the awaiting to appreciate the value of divine guardianship and endeavor to maintain it, unless they be impacted by propaganda of enemies, being deceived by Satan,

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 18, p. 147, tradition 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 256.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 133, tradition 4.

and deviation from the path of divine guardianship. Above all, Satan makes attempts to make them deviated from the true path and leaves no stone unturned to rob the awaiting of such gem and pave the ground for satanic conquest. Obligations of the awaiting include reflecting no inclination towards Satan, but to endure poverty and refrain from losing divine guardianship. They are supposed to abstain from attaining to social position and prestige through such loss. In return, what they gain will not be on a par with what they lose through following Satan. No gem is comparable to divine guardianship in terms of brilliance and nothing may substitute it. Mundane gains despite their deceptive splendor are far inferior to the divine guardianship of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS), since one who enters such transaction will be so unfortunate and, on the contrary, one who maintains the divine Guardianship of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) by all his means will be so happy.

The Messenger of God (SAW) is reported as saying, "Happy are those who happen to be contemporaneous with the Riser from my *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS), having followed the noble Riser (AS) prior to his rise, maintained his devotion to the Riser's (AS) supporters, renounced his enemies, and acknowledged the divine guardianship of the Pure Imams (AS). They will be my friends and those of my most endeared people of my community (*umma*)."<sup>1</sup>

Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (AS) said, "Happy are our followers who maintain our divine guardianship and affection during the occultation of our Riser. They persevere in maintaining our affection and divine guardianship and renouncing our enemies. They are from us and we are from them. They are pleased that we are their Imams and leaders and we are delighted that they are our followers. Happy are those! By God! They will be with us on the Day of Resurrection."<sup>2</sup>

Imam 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn (AS) said, "One who maintains our

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 129, tradition 25, vol. 51, p. 72, tradition 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 151, tradition 6.

divine guardianship during the occultation of our Riser will be granted by God the rewards for one thousand martyrs fallen in the Battles of Badr and Uhud."<sup>1</sup>

Imam Bāqir (AS) said, "There will be day when the Imam of the people will be concealed from their eyes. Happy will be those who maintain our divine guardianship."<sup>2</sup>

## 8. Maintaining Religion

Religion constitutes one of the most necessary requirements of individual and social life. Religion is a precious gem entailing order, security, and peace to all mankind in whose light they may lead a pure and delightful live. Religion is the best law of life and a comprehensive plan for happiness in this world and the hereafter. Weak belief is one of the issues of the period of occultation. Unbelief wields its sway consequent to the propaganda of foreigners and enemies regarding religion as an impediment in the way of their conquest. Religiousness and maintaining belief will entail hardships in such situation, such that as reflected in some traditions, maintaining faith in the last days of the world will be like holding fire on the palm of one's hand.

Imam Šādiq (AS) said, "Verily, there shall be a period of occultation for the Lord of Command and the similitude of those aspiring to maintain their faith will be the one who intends to scrape thorns off a thorny branch with hands."<sup>3</sup>

It is incumbent upon the awaiting to endure hardships in order to maintain their faith. Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (AS) is reported as saying, "Upon the occultation of the fifth son of the Seventh Imam (AS), remember God at all times, strive to maintain your faith, and exercise precaution unless you may deviate from the straight path and be robbed of your faith."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 125, tradition 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 14, tradition 66.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 135, tradition 39, p. 111, tradition 21.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 150, tradition 1.

Regarding the rewards granted for maintaining faith, the Commander of the Faithful (AS) said, "Behold! Whoever maintains his faith and his heart is not hardened during the period of occultation will be resurrected with me on the Day of Judgment."<sup>1</sup>

## **9. Military Preparation and Supplying Weaponry**

The awaiting are obliged to fully prepare themselves for their arrival during the period of occultation and procure the means for supporting the Rising Imam (AS). Abū Baṣīr narrates from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) as saying, "Each of you is supposed to procure some means for the arrival, even if it happens to be an arrow. Thus, he may set his hopes on Divine Grace to prolong his lifetime so that he may be contemporaneous with the arrival and render support to the Imam (AS)."<sup>2</sup>

## **10. Settlement of Financial Obligations**

It is recorded in the noble epistle of the Imam of the Age (AS) addressed to Shaykh Muḥīd, "We make a promise to you ... that if your brethren in faith fear God Almighty and settle their financial obligations, they will be safeguarded against deviating seditions and if they be niggardly, they will be losers in this world and the hereafter."<sup>3</sup>

## **11. Annual Presentation of Gifts to the Imam of the Age (AS)**

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said to Muḥaḍḍal, "I heard father saying, 'One who fails to present any gift, however insignificant, to use within a period of one year will not be granted Divine

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 109, tradition 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 366, tradition 146.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 53, tradition 177.

Mercy on the Day of Resurrection, unless He forgives him.”<sup>1</sup>

Concerning the significance of presenting such gifts, the noble Imam said, “If you present a gift of one dirham to your Imam, it will be more valuable than expending thousands of dirham for charitable purposes for the Cause of Allah.”<sup>2</sup>

## **12. Refraining from Specifying any Time for Arrival and Denial of Those Specifying Such Time**

Fuḍayl asked Imam Bāqir (AS), “Will there be a specific time for matter?” The noble Imam repeated thrice, “Those who specify a specific time for arrival are liars.”<sup>3</sup> Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said to Muḥammad ibn Muslim, “Do not entertain fear of denying anyone specifying the time of arrival, since we never specify any time for anyone.”<sup>4</sup>

## **13. Refraining from Claiming Special Deputyship and Denying Whoever Makes Such Claim**

It is recorded in the noble epistle of the Imam of the Age (AS) addressed to his last special deputy: “Do not allow anyone to succeed you after your demise, since it is the outset of major occultation. Some people will before long claim to be special deputies for my followers. Behold! Deny whoever makes such claim prior to the arrival of Sufyānī and the outcry heard from heaven.”<sup>5</sup>

## **14. Abstaining from Making a Name for Himself**

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī (AS) said from a pulpit in Kufa, “You will face pitch dark

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 96, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 96, p. 216, tradition 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 103, tradition 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 104, tradition 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 361, vol. 52, p. 151, tradition 1.

seditions from which only those keeping low profiles will find deliverance." The noble Imam (AS) was inquired about those who keep a low profile. He replied, "Those who know people, but people do not know them."<sup>1</sup>

Fame is the blight of this world and that of faith and seeking it jeopardizes their integrity. In this vein, the Commander of the Faithful said, "Seeking fame is the source of all afflictions."<sup>2</sup> One may better succeed in maintaining his faith despite the seditions to occur in the last days of the world through keeping a low profile.

## 15. Checking the Unruly Tongue

Checking the unruly tongue entails the integrity of faith and life. The Messenger of God (SAW) is reported as saying, "Integrity of in this world and the hereafter is safeguarded by checking the unruly tongue."<sup>3</sup> Our obligations include checking the unruly tongue in the seditions occurring in the last days of the world jeopardizing the integrity of faith and life. Imam Muḥammad Bāqir (AS) was inquired by Jābir: "O son of the Messenger of God! What is the best of nobilities for believers during the period of occultation?" The noble Prophet (SAW) replied, "Checking the unruly tongue and supporting the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS)."<sup>4</sup>

## 16. Distancing Oneself from Corrupt Environments

Distancing oneself from corrupt environments constitutes one of the means of maintaining faith. When the environment is corrupt and one may not alter it, one has to distance himself from it in order to avoid pollution and thereby maintain one's faith and life." In this regard, the Command of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 112, under tradition 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Shabḥāyi Intiẓār*, vol. 1, p. 272, quoting '*Uyūn al-Ḥikam wa 'l-Mawā'iz*', p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 71, p. 286.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 145, tradition 66.

the Faithful said, "Distancing oneself from [corrupt] people entails integrity of faith."<sup>1</sup> Environments will be more corrupt and people will be further impure in the last days of the world; therefore distancing oneself from such environments has been further emphasized. In this respect, the Command of the Faithful said, "There will be a time when out of ten parts of integrity nine will rest in distancing oneself from people and one in keeping silent."<sup>2</sup>

However, since some traditions renounce distancing oneself from people, some scholars maintain that by such isolation, abstaining from the unworthy conducts of people is intended; namely, one may be among people, but his heart must not follow them. In other words, one must be isolated among people. It is said that desirable isolation is possible among people, such that one may be apparently with them, but one may be inwardly isolated from them."<sup>3</sup> The Commander of the Faithful said, "Soci'Alize with people in appearance but distance yourself from them in heart and conduct."<sup>4</sup>

## 17. Staying at home and Abstaining from leaving it

In his *Ma'ānī al-Akbbār* Ṣadūq narrates on the authority of Ḥusayn ibn Khālīd from Imam Riḍā (AS). Ḥusayn inquired the Imam (AS), "May I be your sacrifice! There is a tradition narrated by 'Abd Allah ibn Bukayr on the authority of 'Ubayd ibn Zurāra." Imam asked, "What is that?" I said, "It is narrated on the authority of 'Ubayd ibn Zurara that he visited Imam Ṣādiq (AS) in the year of Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abd Allah's Rising saying to the noble Imam: Ibrāhīm has attracted people by saying certain words. What is your opinion and command?" Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "Fear God and stay calm so long as serenity prevails over the heavens and the earth." Ibn Bukayr

<sup>1</sup> *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 11, p. 393.

<sup>2</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 70, p. 110, traditions 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Muntaha 'l-Āmāl*, vol. 2, p. 255.

<sup>4</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 116, under tradition 37.



said, "In that event, there will be neither a rise, nor a riser." Imam Riḍā said, "The tradition is sound, though its interpretation is unfounded. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) intended to say that you may keep calm so long as the heavens are not perturbed by calls to the name of your Commander and the earth is not disturbed by devouring Sufyānī's army."

This tradition of those of a similar nature reflect that in order to maintain their faith, the waiting should refrain from following those who will make claims, hold banners, and calling people to themselves in the seditions to occur in the last days of the world. The awaiting are obliged to opt for isolation rather than following any riser. Abū Jārūd said to Imam Bāqir (AS), "Please provide me with some piece of advice." The Imam said, "I recommend that you fear God and stay at home and abstain from those who rise from our house [without Imam's permission], since they neither rise on true grounds, nor aspire to achieve true goals, nor attain to their aims."<sup>1</sup>

Abū Bakr Ḥaḍramī said, "When black banners were raised in Khurāsān, Abān and I joined audience with Imam Ṣādiq (AS), inquiring, "What is your opinion?" He replied, "Stay at your homes."<sup>2</sup> Imam Riḍā is reported as saying, "Are you not pleased with staying at home awaiting our command? Expend for your family and you will be, upon arrival, as if you fought with the Messenger of God (SAW) at the Battle of Badr; but if you happen to be not contemporaneous with arrival, you will be like those accompanying our Riser and those staying with him at his pavilion."<sup>3</sup> The Commander of the Faithful (AS) said, "There will be a time when people will be best stay at home."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 136, tradition 41.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 138, tradition 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 4, p. 260; *Wasā'il*, vol. 8, p. 86, tradition 1.

<sup>4</sup> *al-Taḥṣīn*, p. 18.

## **18. Following the Principles of Discretionary Concealment of Beliefs**

Fearing of incurring any loss to his life or property, believers are obliged to withhold the truth before enemies. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "Discretionary concealment of beliefs is obligatory until the Rise of the Promised Mahdī (AS) and whoever acts inconsistent with it has committed an error forbidden by God, His Messenger (SAW), and the Pure Imams (AS)."<sup>1</sup> Imam Riḍā (AS) is reported as saying, "Whoever disregards discretionary concealment of beliefs prior to our Riser's Arrival."<sup>2</sup>

## **19. Abstaining from Calling the Imam of the Age at Assemblies by His Original Name.**

It was mentioned above under the name and title of the noble Imam (AS).

## **20. Arising out of Veneration upon Hearing the Name, Particularly the Noble Title "Riser"**

It was mentioned above under the name and title of the noble Imam (AS).

## **21. According Particular Attention to the Noble Imam (AS)**

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) was inquired, "Has the Rising Imam been born?" He replied, "No, he has not, but if I happen to be contemporaneous with him, I will serve him all my life." The luminous tradition reflects that serving the Imam of the Age (AS) is the noblest of acts of worship and the most significant means of closeness to him.

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 75, p. 421, tradition 79.

<sup>2</sup> *Kāmal al-Dīn*, vol. 2, p. 371; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 321, tradition 29.

## 22. Praying and Expending Alms for the Noble Imam's (AS) Health

The awaiting whose desire above all is their noble Imam's (AS) health and safety are obliged to take the required measures in this respect. They are supposed to invoke God to ward off any affliction from his blessed Imam (AS). It is also incumbent upon them to expend alms for his health and safety. Sayyid ibn Tāwūs said, "Love the noble Imam and be loyal to him as expected by God, His Messenger (SAW), and the Pure Imams (AS). Regard his requirements precedent you your own and expend alms for him prior to expending them for your beloved ones."<sup>1</sup>

## 23. Grieve over Separation from the Noble Imam (AS)

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, "Believers' eyes are tearful for being separated from him."<sup>2</sup> It is narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) on the authority of Sudayr Ṣayrafī that wept for the occultation of the noble Imam (AS) and the vicissitudes of the occultation period like someone having lost his beloved. The Imam (AS) sorrowfully said, "My master! Your occultation has made me sleepless, devoid peace of mind. My master! Your occultation has made my hardships permanent ..."<sup>3</sup>

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) wept for the chaotic circumstances of our times coinciding with the period of occultation and occurrence of afflictions, seditions, doubts, deviations, and errors by which the Shī'īs are entangled, but we are negligent in our indifference towards the depth of such afflictions.

Imam Ridā (AS) said, "The inhabitants the heavens and the earth, any sorrowful man and woman, cry over him."<sup>4</sup> If we truly reflect upon the question, we will notice that not only believers but also faith and the Qur'an cry over him. The faith and the

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<sup>1</sup> *Kashf al-Mahajja*, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 281, tradition 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 219, tradition 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 152, tradition 2.

Qur'an, nominally existing among people, grieve for people's indifference and invoke God for the arrival of the Riser.

## 24. Striving towards Calling People to Accord Significance to the Noble Imam (AS)

The awaiting are obliged to strive towards calling people to accord attention to the noble Imam (AS) through establishment of assemblies, publication of valuable material concerning the Imam (AS), his attributes, and constructive plans, providing expositions of the unprecedented developments to occur upon the arrival of the noble Imam (AS). They may call people to pay further attention to the affectionate master and the polar of the world of existence and render void the propaganda of enemies. Thus, they may be granted the blessings of the Pure Imams (AS) who said, "May God bestow His Grace on servants who revive the affairs of us, the *Ahl al-Bayt*."<sup>1</sup>

## 25. Remembering the Noble Imam at All Times

It is incumbent upon the awaiting to remember the noble Imam at all times rather than being preoccupied with worldly life. Rather than being negligent in remembering him, they should feel the vacuum created by his occultation and grieve over being separated from him. The compassionate Imam (AS) says, "I always remember you." So, we should remember our master and we should know that any blessing bestowed upon us is due to his grace. He is the intermediary of divine blessings. Our remembrance of him is the most fruitful means of our spiritual growth, illuminating our hearts and life, invigorating our souls and faith, serving as a cure for our ailments. Au contraire, negligence in remembering him entails darkness and all evils and adversities.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 126, tradition 16.

## Section 5

### Tumultuous Times of Arrival

#### 1. Fulfillment of Divine Promise is Inevitable

It would be a desideratum to record in part the tremendous glory of the time of arrival and depict such purity, fear of God, truth, justice, faith, courage, welfare, and security appearing in the light of the noble Imam's (AS) arrival. Our pen fails at depicting such beauty. The arrival of the Imam of the Age (AS) will occur when all values and truths will be manifest. Upon his arrival he will establish a state unprecedented in the history of mankind, a state based on fear of God, nobilities, and monotheism, the ideal of all the Prophets (AS) and saints. It will put an end to injustice, evil, corruption, and disorder. It will be the end of sorrows and grieves.

It would be quite hard and beyond human perception to produce an exposition of the circumstances following the Arrival of the Rising Imam (AS), since such drastic development will be unprecedented in the world, something inexperienced by humanity down the history. In this respect, Imam Şadiq (AS) said, "Upon his Rise, the Rising Imam (AS) will introduce something unprecedented."<sup>1</sup>

Ordinary men may not depict the Arrival Age or Paradise, since it would be impossible to depict inexperienced matters. Therefore, we may approach it through divine revelation as imparted to the Prophets (AS) and reflected in the traditions

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 332.

narrated from the *Ahl al-Bayt*. Further traditions in this regard will be mentioned below.

In his *Sa'd al-Su'ud* Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs says, "I saw in the scripture of Prophet Idrīs (AS) that when Iblīs [Satan] asked God Almighty to provide him with respite to the Day of Resurrection, He said, 'Nay, but I will provide you with a respite to an appointed day when I made it inevitable that I would make the earth will be purged of disbelief, polytheism, and sin.

"I have chosen servants for that time whose hearts I have tested in terms of faith and have filled them with piety, devotion, certitude, fear of Me, humbleness, sincerity, fortitude, dignity and indifference towards mundane affairs. They call the sun and the moon [and hear their responses]. I will make them vicegerents in the earth and I will strengthen and maintain the religion I have chose for them. Then, they will worship Me and associate nothing with Me in their devotions.<sup>1</sup> They establish their prayers and pay alms tax at appointed times and enjoin doing righteous deeds and forbid doing evil deeds."<sup>2</sup>

"Trustworthiness and sincerity will prevail at that time

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<sup>1</sup> The theme is attested in the Holy Qur'an (24:55), "God has promised those among you who believe and do righteous deeds that He shall appoint them as His vicegerents in the earth, as He granted the same to those before them. He will strengthen and maintain the religion which He chose for them. Then, He will provide them with peace and security after their entertaining fear, so that they worship Him and associate nothing with Him in their worship."

<sup>2</sup> The Holy Qur'an (22:41) says, "Those are the people whom we gave power in the land; those who establish prayers, pay alms tax, enjoin the good and forbid the evil." Concerning the blessed verse in question, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "It alludes to Imam Mahdī (AS) and his companions who will be appointed as the rulers of the east and the west and will thus make the religion triumphant. It will be through them that God will purge the earth of unwarranted innovations and falsehood, as tyrants trampled the rights of the oppressed. There will be no instance of injustice anywhere and everyone will enjoin the good and forbid the evil. See *Nūr al-Thiqalayn*, vol. 3, p. 506.

and no being will harm or fear another. Reptiles and quadrupeds will live among people and none of them harms the other. I will remove stings of pernicious creatures. I will send down blessings from the heavens onto the earth. The earth will be particularly rejuvenated by its beautiful verdure and will manifest its flowers and fruits. I'll make the hearts affectionate such that affection prevails and they act upon it. Then, they will distribute wealth among themselves on an equal basis. The poor will be needless and no one will regard himself superior to others. Seniors will be affectionate toward juniors and the latter will respect the former. All people will believe in the true religion based on which they will treat each other in justice. ... That day which is concealed in My Knowledge of the Unseen will inevitably arrive when you and all your armies, infantry and cav'Alīer, will be destroyed by Me. Then, depart, since you have your respite until the appointed day.

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS) said, "Upon the arrival of the noble Imam (AS), inhabitants of the heavens will rejoice."<sup>1</sup> The Messenger of God (SAW) said, "Birds in their nests and fish in the seas shall rejoice upon the arrival."<sup>2</sup> All believers will rejoice, even those already departed. They visit each other bearing the glad tidings of such great triumph." The Commander of the Faithful said, "There will be no departed soul, unless they rejoice in their hearts and graves. They will visit each other in the graves and in the other world, bearing the glad tidings of the arrival of Imam Mahdī (AS)."<sup>3</sup>

Divine Promise shall be definitely fulfilled. Based on numerous traditions transmitters narrated by Shī'ī and Sunnī narrators, the Messenger of God (SAW) said, "Even if there remain one single day of the life of the world, God Almighty will prolong that day until His Argument and Last Remainder

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 120, under tradition 22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 304, tradition 73.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 35, tradition 4, vol. 52, p. 328, tradition 48.

arrives.”<sup>1</sup> Imam Baqir (AS) said to Abū Ḥamza, “O Abū Ḥamza! Inevitable events preordained by God Almighty include the Rise of our Riser, the noble Imam Mahdī (AS).”<sup>2</sup>

### ● No Specific Time Has Been Mentioned for Arrival

Traditions reflect that the time of arrival is one of the instances of change in Divine Decree; namely it may occur earlier or later subsequent to certain interests, expediency, and conditions. No specific time has been mentioned for arrival, but it has been said that whoever specifies some time, deny him. It would be advisable that believers permanently await the arrival. Had there been some time specified for arrival, believers could not be so eager and hopeful.

## 2. Signs of Arrival

Arrival time is only known by God, His Messenger (SAW), and the Pure Imams (AS), but it has been concealed from us. Nonetheless, certain tokens have been enumerated acquaintance of which may serve as a significant means of revealing the true identity of pretenders to the rise prior to the Riser's (AS) arrival. In this respect, ‘Umar ibn Abān narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) as saying, “Make yourselves acquainted with the tokens [of arrival], since such acquaintance will render you assistance to not be affected by its hastening or delay.”<sup>3</sup>

Some of the tokens of arrival are connected to life of the public and the changes made in cultural, religious, and social terms. Certain traditions narrated from the Noble Prophet (SAW) and the Pure Imams (AS) reflect the future states of the society, women, men, scholars, jurists, judges, Qur'an reciters, preachers, tradesmen, the affluent, the poor, and other walks of life. Some traditions reflect people's religiousness.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, pp. 84, 86, 96, 104, 156.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 139, tradition 13, vol. 52, p. 294.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 142, tradition 57.



The traditions that actually embrace predictions are termed as *malāḥim* ("Revelations").

The Messenger of God is reported as saying, "There will be a time when people will not entertain any fear to exchange worldly gain for loss of their faith."<sup>1</sup> "Their faith will be their dirham and their endeavors will be to satisfy worldly pleasures. They will bow down for pleasures of the flesh and prostrate for dirham. They will be in perplexity, neither Muslims nor Christians."<sup>2</sup> "There will be a time, before long, for my community (*umma*) to be evil and impure inwardly, but they embellish their appearance, not for God, but for worldly gain [affluence and power]. They will be occupied with dissimulation without fearing God Who will afflict them all with torments. It will be of no avail to them even if they invoke God to save them from drowning."<sup>3</sup>

The Noble Prophet (SAW) said to Ibn Mas'ūd, "O son of Mas'ūd! There will be time when everyone will try to maintain his faith in the manner that one tries to hold fire on the palm of his hand. At that time, only those who lead the lives of wolves will be able to survive unless they will be devoured by wolves."<sup>4</sup> The Commander of the Faithful (AS) is reported as saying, "There will be a time, before long, that nothing will be more concealed than truth and nothing more apparent than falsehood. Making false claims about God and His Messenger (SAW) will be most prevalent. There will be nothing less significant to people than the Qur'an, though nothing is on a par with the Holy Qur'an if it is recited accurately. However, the Book of God will be subject to distortions satisfying their false interpretations. At that time and in those cities nothing will be more unpleasant than religiously recommended deeds and nothing more pleasant than forbidden deeds."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 77, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 74, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 190, tradition 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Ilzām al-Nāṣib*, vol. 2, p. 150.

<sup>5</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 34, p. 233, vol. 77, p. 368.

Some of the tokens are connected to natural phenomena, e. g. drought, famine, oft-happening earthquakes, decrease in harvest, far reaching floods, high temperature, rise of shooting stars, and rising of the sun from the west. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "The sign of Imam Mahdī's (AS) arrival will be sun eclipse in the auspicious month of Ramaḍān on the thirteenth or fifteenth day."<sup>1</sup> Imam Riḍā said, "Buyūh will occur prior to Imam Mahdī's (AS) Rise." The narrator said, "I did not know the meaning of the word, but during my pilgrimage to Mecca, I heard a Bedouin saying: 'Today is the day of Buyūh.' I asked inquired about the meaning of the word and he replied: 'Very hot.'"<sup>2</sup>

Imam Bāqir (AS) is reported as saying, "There will be two signs prior to the arrival: 1. Moon eclipse in the fifth month. 2. Sun eclipse on the fifteenth day of the month. Such signs will be unprecedented since the time God sent down Prophet Adam (AS) onto this world and such occurrences will render astronomical calculations inaccurate."<sup>3</sup>

Some traditions are concerned with the year of arrival, e. g. the rises of Sayyid Ḥasanī and Sufyānī. Some others are related to the day of arrival, like an outcry heard from the heaven.

Based on another classification, some signs are not inevitable, though some are certain to happen for which two interpretations have been provided. Firstly, some signs shall happen, but some are not certain to occur. Secondly, occurrence of some signs shall entail arrival, but some may occur without entailing arrival. Concerning inevitable signs, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, "The outcry to be heard from the heaven, Sufyānī's rise, appearance of a hand in the heaven, and execution of Nafs Zakiyya ("lit. pure soul") are inevitable."<sup>4</sup> According to another tradition narrated from

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<sup>1</sup> *Ghaybat Nu'mānī*, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 271; *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 242, tradition 113.

<sup>3</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, tradition 207; *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 2, p. 189.

<sup>4</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 233; *Ithbāt al-Hudāh*, vol. 3, p. 735, tradition 99.

Imam Ṣādiq (AS), "Inevitable signs occurring prior to the arrival of the noble Imam of the Age (AS) include Sufyānī's rise, landslide in Baydā', execution of Nafs Zakīyya, and the outcry to be heard from the heaven."

#### a. Sufyānī

A descendant of Abū Sufyān, this wicked and blood shedding criminal will rise prior to the arrival of the Imam of the Age (AS) in Syria. Having conquered Syria and its neighboring regions, he will invade Iraq; above all, he will leave no stone unturned to massacre the Shī'is. The Commander of the Faithful (AS) said, "Sufyānī massacres many people, particularly those bearing the names of Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn owing to his hatred and animosity towards the descendants of Muḥammad (SAW). Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "Sufyānī is one of the inevitable signs. He will rise in the Month of Rajab and there will only be fifteen months from the outset of his rebellion to his destruction."<sup>1</sup>

#### b. Landslide at Baydā'

Inevitable signs of arrival include a landslide at Baydā', a region between Mecca and Medina. It will happen when Sufyānī leads a campaign against Mecca to confront the Imam of the Age (AS), but they will be devoured by the earth by Divine Command. Two soldiers will survive to communicate the message, one to the general of the army of the Remainder of God (AS) and the other to the army general of disbelief, namely the accursed Sufyānī. Imam Bāqir (AS) said, "Sufyānī's army general will be apprised of Mahdī's (AS) expedition towards Mecca. So, the former dispatches an army against him, but they will fail to find him. ... Upon the arrival of Sufyānī's army at Baydā', a caller from the heavens will cry:

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 248, tradition 130; *Ithbāt al-Hudāh*, vol. 3, p. 739, tradition 120.

'O Baydā! Destroy them.' Then, the land will devour the army."<sup>1</sup>

### c. Yamānī's Rise

A man from Yemen will rise at the threshold of Imam's Rise, calling people towards God and Truth. Imam Bāqir (AS) said, "Yamānī's banner will excel others in terms of guidance. His will be that of guidance, since he will call people to join your Commander, Imam Mahdī (AS)."<sup>2</sup>

### d. Outcry from the Heaven

The inevitable signs include an outcry from the heavens to be heard by the world. One of features of the cry is that each nation will hear it in their own language. Zurāra asked Imam Ṣādiq (AS), "Is the outcry from the heavens true?" Imam replied, "Aye, By God! It is true and each nation will hear it in their language."<sup>3</sup> The outcry will be heard in Friday evening of 23<sup>rd</sup> of Ramaḍān. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "Our Riser (AS) will not rise unless an outcry from the heavens calls him by his name the evening of 23<sup>rd</sup> of Ramaḍān."<sup>4</sup>

What will be the subject matter of that outcry from the heavens? Different traditions provide different materials some of which will be mentioned below. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, "The Caller will call: Verily, 'Alī (AS) and his followers will be happy and triumphant."<sup>5</sup> In another tradition he is reported as saying, "The Call will be: "O people of Truth! Get together!"<sup>6</sup> According to another tradition from the Imam (AS), "Behold! The one [Namely Ḥujjat ibn al-Ḥasan

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<sup>1</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 237, tradition 105; *Ghaybat Nu'mānī*, p. 280, tradition 67, chapter 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ghaybat Nu'mānī*, p. 256, tradition 13, chapter 14; *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 232, tradition 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 244, tradition 120.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 119, tradition 49.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 305, tradition 75.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 365, tradition 145.

(AS)] is the Lord of Command.”<sup>1</sup>

c. Slaying of Nafs Zakiyya( lit. Pure Spirit)

The inevitable signs of arrival of the Imam (AS) will be the slaying of an innocent many by enemies of the Imam of the Age (AS) at a place lying between Rukn and Maqām, 15 days prior to Imam Mahdī's (AS) Rise. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, “There shall be some inevitable occurrences before the Riser's (AS) Rise, including the slaying of Nafs Zakiyya.”<sup>2</sup> He is also reported as saying, “The period of time between Imam Mahdī's (AS) Rise and the slaying of Nafs Zakiyya shall not exceed fifteen nights.”<sup>3</sup>

Numerous signs have been mentioned, including the Rises of Sayyid Ḥasanī, Khurāsānī, Miṣrī, and Dajjāl; seditions, disturbances, and chaotic situations; and raising many a banner whose accounts are to be found in sources. It is noteworthy that the awaiting are supposed to be in a permanent state of alert. They are supposed to await for arrival rather than the signs, since such signs, even inevitable ones, are subject to alterations by Divine Command. As mentioned above, by their inevitability, it is intended that the arrival shall be inevitable if the event of their occurrence.

Dā'ūd ibn Qāsim said, “We had joined with the audience of the noble Imam Jawād al-A'imma (AS), when Sufyānī's rise was mentioned as an inevitable sign of arrival. I inquired, ‘Will such inevitable signs be subject to alteration by Divine Command?’ He replied, ‘Aye.’ I said, ‘I fear that will be such alteration in the Riser's (AS) arrival.’ He said, ‘The Riser's (AS) arrival is a Divine Promise and such Promises shall be fulfilled.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the time of arrival is subject to Divine

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 296, tradition 52.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 294, tradition 44.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 203, tradition 30; *Ithbāt al-Hudāh*, vol. 3, p. 731, tradition 77.

<sup>4</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 250, tradition 138; *Ithbāt al-Hudāh*, vol. 3, p. 740, tradition 123.

Will. In this vein, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "Await the arrival of your master day and night."<sup>1</sup> He is also reported as saying, "Await the arrival each and every morn and eve."<sup>2</sup>

The Messenger of God (SAW) said, "He will arrive, but of a sudden." He will arrival unexpectedly; thus, the awaiting should be prepared for his arrival and rendering assistance to him at all times. It is incumbent upon them to renew their allegiance to him every morn, stating that they are steadfast on their pledge and shall never abandon him, but they persevere for the Cause of his Imamate.

### 3. Events of the Time of Arrival

The events to occur upon the arrival include the following.

#### a. The Sword and Banner of the Noble Imam (AS) upon His Arrival

The Messenger of God (SAW) is reported as saying, "He will have a banner that will unfold upon his rise. God will make him speak, saying: 'O friend of God! Rise and destroy the enemies of God.' He will have a sheathed sword which he will unsheathe upon his rise. God will make him speak, saying: 'O friend of God! Rise. You should not keep silent against the enemies of God.'"

It is worthy of note that the Imam of the Age (AS) shall be informed in advance of the time of his Rise upon Divine Revelation and Grace. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) was inquired about the meaning of the blessed Qur'anic Verse (74:8): "Then, when the Trumpet is sounded." He said, "Our Imam is concealed from public eye, though upon Divine Command his heart will receive Divine Revelation and He will rise upon Divine Command."<sup>3</sup> This matter will be actualized upon the noble

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<sup>1</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 98, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 145, under tradition 67.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 58, tradition 49.

Imam's (AS) invocation to God.

Regarding the blessed Qur'anic verse (27:62) "Is not He Who responds to the distressed one when he calls on Him Who removes the evil" Imam Ṣādiq is reported as saying, "The blessed verse alludes to the Riser (AS) from the descendants of Muḥammad (SAW). By God! "the distressed" (*muḍṭarr*) refers to the noble Imam (AS). When he establishes two *rak'as* of prayers and prays, God will answer his prayers, putting an end to his period of occultation and appoints him as his vicegerent in the earth."

#### **b. Issuance of the Command of Arrival**

Mufaḍḍal asked Imam Ṣādiq (AS), "O my master! Whence he will arrive and what will be the manner of his arrival?" He replied, "He will depart for Bayt al-Ḥarām alone and will enter Ka'ba alone. Darkness of night shall enfold everywhere and he will be still alone. After a while when everyone will be asleep, Gabriel, Michael, and some lines of angels will descend, joining audience with the noble Imam (AS), saying: "O master! Your prayers have been answered and the Command of Arrival has been issued." Imam (AS) will touch his face, reciting the Qur'anic verse (39:74): "Praise belongs to Allah Who fulfilled His promise and made us the inheritors of the earth and we will dwell in Paradise wherever we wish and it is a good reward for those who obey His Commands."

Then, he will stand between Rukn and Maqām, shouting: "O chosen supporters of mine! O you who have been saved by God to render me support! Come to me willingly." His voice will be heard at every corner of the world, when some of them will be praying at altars and some will be asleep in their beds. Upon hearkening to the call, they will join the audience of Imam (AS) in the twinkling of an eye. Their number will be 313, as many as the warrior fighting for the Messenger of God (SAW) at the Battle of Badr.

#### c. Pledging Allegiance to the Imam of the Age (AS)

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said to Mufaḍḍal, "O Mufaḍḍal! The Rising Imam (AS) will rely on Bayt al-Ḥarām, extending his noble hand, saying: 'This hand is extended upon Divine Command.' Then, he will recite the Qur'anic verse (48:10): 'Verily, those who give pledge to you they are giving pledge to Allah. The Hand of Allah is over their hands. Then, whoever breaks his pledge breaks it only to his own harm.'"

#### d. Gabriel (AS) Pledging Allegiance to the noble Imam (AS)

Gabriel (AS) will precede others in kissing his hand and pledging his allegiance to be followed by angels and the chosen ones from among jinn and mankind."<sup>1</sup>

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "Gabriel (AS) (AS) shall precede others in pledging allegiance to the Rising Imam (AS)." Gabriel (AS) will be followed by the noble Imam's (AS) companions in expressing their loyalty and pledging allegiance to their master.

#### e. Descent of Swords from the Heavens

It is reflected and emphasized in traditions that the noble Imam (AS) will rise with a sword. Besides, they also reflect resemblances of the Imam of the Age (AS) to the Messenger of God (SAW) and other Prophets (AS). Imam Sajjād (AS) said, "There will be certain traditions of Prophets (AS) in our Riser from the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) and that of the Muḥammad (SAW) is that he will rise holding a sword."<sup>2</sup> In this respect, Imam Bāqir said, "He will put his sword on his shoulder and will slay the enemies of God at all times in order to please Him."<sup>3</sup>

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, "Upon the Rise of the Rising Imam (AS), swords will descent from the heavens, one each of which will bear an inscription indicating the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 53, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 217, under tradition 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 218, tradition 7.



names of the warrior and his father.”<sup>1</sup>

#### f. Taking the Banner of Triumph to the Noble Imam (AS)

The Banner of Triumph (*liwā' naṣr*) used to be with the Messenger of God (SAW)<sup>2</sup> which was unfolded by him at the Battle of Badr. Unfolding it attracted angels of different ranks and the limited number of warrior, numbering 313 defeated the army of disbelief and polytheism whose number exceeded 10,000. The banner was unfolded by the Commander of the Faithful (AS) at the Battle of Baṣra and the army of enemies was defeated in early evening. The noble Imam (AS) was asked to open it at the Battle of Ṣiffīn, but he declined, saying: “No one will unfold it until the Rising Imam (AS) rises and will unfold it.”

The features of the banner include the qu'Alīty by which it casts fear into the hearts of enemies. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, “It casts fear into the hearts of enemies in the four directions to the distance of a one month journey.”<sup>3</sup> The banner will destroy any individual or group that confronts it. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, “He will unfold the banner of the Messenger of God (SAW) whose pole is from the feet of Divine Throne and the rest of it is made of Divine Triumph. He will not confront anything holding the banner but God Almighty will destroy it. When he raises the banner, the hearts of all believers will be strong as pieces of iron.”<sup>4</sup>

When the banner is flying, it illuminates the distance between the east and the west. The Commander of the Faithful said, “When he flies his banner, it will illuminate the distance between the east and the west.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 356, tradition 121.

<sup>2</sup> Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said to Abū Baṣīr, “I saw the banner of the Messenger of God (SAW). It is made of heavenly leaves,” see *Ghaybat Nu'mānī*, p. 307, under tradition 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 367, tradition 152.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 328, tradition 48.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 35, tradition 4.

**g. The Imam of the Age's (AS) Appearance as a Young Man Despite His Advanced Years**

It was mentioned above under the characteristics of the last Divine Argument (AS) that he is not subject to the passage of time, since he is the Lord of the Age; his Command prevails over all the world of existence and obedience to him is an existential necessity (*wujūb takwīnī*) to the world. So, the commander of the world, despite being advanced in years, appears in the form of a young man less than forty years of age. It is a trial to distinguish between those who confess to Divine Omnipotence and those who cast doubts on it.

Imam Muḥtabā (AS) said, "People will deny Imam Mahdī (AS) upon his Rise, since they expect to find an old man, but they see a young man returned to them."<sup>1</sup>

Imam Ṣādiq is reported as saying, "The hardest trials include the appearance of the Lord of Command as a young man, though they imagined that he was an old man."<sup>2</sup>

**h. Particular Splendor of the Rise of the Imam of the Age (AS)**

Imam Bāqir (AS) said, "He will rise wearing the robe worn by the Messenger of God (SAW) at the Battle of Uḥud, wearing the latter's turban, named *Ṣaḥāb*, wearing the noble Prophet's (SAW) armor, and having Dhū 'l-Fiḳār [sword] on his belt."<sup>3</sup>

**i. A Cloud Casting Shadow on the Noble Imam (AS)**

The Messenger of God (SAW) said, "Imam Mahdī (AS) will rise when a cloud casts its shadow on his head from which a caller will call: 'This is the Promised Mahdī, God's Vicegerent. Obey him!'"<sup>4</sup> He is also reported as saying, "There will be an

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<sup>1</sup> *Muntakhab al-Athar*, p. 285, chapter 31; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 287, under tradition 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 361, tradition 129.

<sup>3</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 361, tradition 129.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Tablet Tradition, "Mḥmūd [namely Mahdī (AS)] will rise in the last days of the world. A white cloud will cast its shadow on his

angel above his head, calling: 'This is the Promised Mahdī. Obey him!'"<sup>1</sup>

**j. The Imam of the Age's (AS) Delivering a Sermon Calling People to Render Him Support**

The noble Imam (AS) will rely on the Ka'ba at the outset of his arrival, introducing himself and expressing his genealogy tracing back to the Rightly Guided Imams (AS) and the Prophet (SAW), saying, "Nobody is closer to the noble Prophet (SAW) than me in terms of genealogy and nobilities." Then, he will talk about his being wronged and calls people to render him support, saying, "By God! Take God into account in treating us! Do not abandon us, but render us aid, so that God Almighty may render you Aid."<sup>2</sup>

**k. The Army of the Imam of the Age (AS)**

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, "God will render him support by three armies: those of angels, believers, and awe."<sup>3</sup>

**k.1. Angels**

Imam Bāqir (AS) said, "When the Riser from the House of Muḥammad (AS) rises, God will render him Aid through angels." Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "When the Riser (AS) rises, the angels fought at the Battle of Badr on the side of the Messenger of God (SAW), numbering 5,000, will descend." Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is also reported as saying, "Upon his Rise, 13,313 angels will descend from the heavens to render him

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luminous soul, eloquently calling the jinn and mankind at every corner of the world: 'He is Mahdī, a descendant of Muḥammad (AS). He will administer justice throughout the world when it brims over with injustice.' *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 378, tradition 183, vol. 51, p. 81, tradition 16.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 81, tradition 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 238, tradition 105.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 356, tradition 119.

support." The narrator asked him: "Are such multitude angels?" He replied, "Aye, those accompanying Prophet Noah (AS) on the Ark; those accompanying Prophet Abraham (AS) amidst the Fire; those accompanying Prophet Moses (AS) when he clove the sea for the Children of Israel; those accompanying Prophet Jesus (AS) when God made him ascend the heavens; four thousand angels accompanying the noble Prophet (SAW) each bearing signs; one thousand angels who were being marshaled; 313 angels who rendered him support at the Battle of Badr; 4,000 angels who descended to render support to Imam Ḥusayn (AS) and intended to fight his enemies, but the Lord of Martyrs (AS) did not give them permission to engage in battle and they were left disturbed and covered with dust beside the grave of the Martyred Imam (AS). All these angels are prepared in the world for the Rise of the noble Riser (AS) so that they may render him assistance."<sup>1</sup>

## k.2. Believers

The above mentioned 313 believers actually form the nucleus of his supporters who will be immediately marshaled upon his arrival. Imam Bāqir (AS) said, "Gabriel will precede others in pledging allegiance to him, to be followed by 313 supporters ... who, by God, will immediately assemble before him."<sup>2</sup>

Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Mūsā (AS) is narrated on the authority of 'Abd al-'Azīm Ḥasanī as saying, "His supporters will be 313 in number, as many as those who fought at the Battle of Badr. They will marshal before the Imam from the farthest points of the world, circling around him, as reflected in the Holy Qur'an (2:148): 'Wherever you may be, God will make you assemble. Verily, God is Omnipotent.'<sup>3</sup>

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) presents a depiction of them, saying: "Their foreheads have been impressed by prostration. They are

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 328, tradition 48.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 316, tradition 10.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 283, tradition 10.

ascetics at night and lions in the day. It is as if their hearts are pieces of iron. The strength of forty men has been bestowed on each of them.”<sup>1</sup> They are the most v’Aliant and the best warriors of the world. Their hearts brim over with certitude and knowledge of God. Their long awaited wish is to fall martyrs beside the Lord of the Age (AS). In this vein, the Commander of the Faithful said, “Imam Mahdī’s (AS) supporters will be men whose hearts are as strong as pieces of iron. Their hearts brim over with certitude. They are stronger than rocks. If they attack mountains, they will eradicate them. Wherever their banners turn, they will be triumphant. There will be men amidst them who stay all night awake, whose whispering while establishing their prayers brim over the air like the bees. They will stand all night in praying to God. They will mount their horses at morn. They will be ascetics at night and lions in the day. They will always wish for falling martyrs in Allah’s Cause. Their slogan will be “Vengeance for Ḥusayn’s (AS) blood” (*yā ’l-thārāt al-Ḥusayn*). God shall support the True Imam through them.”<sup>2</sup>

The noble Imam (AS) will arrive upon the assembly of those devotees and upon the assembly of 10,000 supporters, he will rise upon Divine Command to slay all the enemies of God by his sharp sword.

### k.3. Fear and Awe

The army of fear and awe will be the third army rendering support to the Imam (AS). God Almighty casts fear of the noble Imam (AS) and his supporters into the hearts of enemies, such that the latter lose all their strength and fear of confronting Imam (AS) and his army. The Messenger of God (SAW) said, “God will render him support by fear.”<sup>3</sup> In this

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 386, tradition 202.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 306, tradition 82, nobilities of Mahdī’s (AS) supporters, p. 20, quoting *Malāḥim wa Fitān*, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 323, tradition 31.

respect, Imam Bāqir (AS) is also reported as saying, "Our Riser will be rendered support by fear."<sup>1</sup> In the manner that his noble forefather, the Seal of the Prophets (SAW) was "Triumphant by Fear" (*manṣūr bi 'l-ru'b*), God Almighty will render him support by casting fear into the hearts of his enemies.

## 1. Conquest of Mecca

Imam Bāqir said, "The Imam of the Age (AS) will say to his supporters, 'Verily, Meccans are not inclined towards us, but we will send an emissary to them to give them warning as it would be befitting me.' Then, he will summon a companion of his, saying to him: 'Go to Meccans and say to them: 'O people of Mecca! I am the emissary dispatched by so and so, who is saying to you: 'We, the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS), are the source of mercy and mine of divine mission and c'Aliphate. We are the descendants of the noble Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) and other Prophets (AS). We have been wronged and our rights have been trampled since the sad demise of the Prophet (SAW). We call you to render us aid. Support us!' the Imam's (AS) emissary will obey his command, but he will be innocently martyred between Rukn and Maqam and the emissary will be known as Nafs Zakiyya. Upon being apprised of his martyrdom, the noble Imam will say to his companions: 'Did I not tell you that the people of Mecca are not inclined towards us. He will dispatch another emissary to them, but he and another emissary will have the same fate. Then, the Imam (AS) will confront them in a severe battle, destroying the rebellious, but some warriors acknowledge his Imamate and become obedient to him.'"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 119, tradition 24; *Kamāl al-Dīn*, vol. 1, p. 331, tradition 16, chapter 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 307, tradition 81.

**m. The City of Kufa, the Seat of Government of the Imam of the Age (AS)**

The Imam (AS) will establish stability in Mecca and departs for Medina and Iraq. He will choose the city of Kufa as the seat of universal state, whence dispatches armies to conquer different parts of the world and his armies will be triumphant.

**n. Who Will be Slain by Imam's (AS) Sword?**

Those who rise against the Imam (AS) and intend to impede his liberating movements will be slain by the sharp swords of the Imam (AS) and his supporters. His enemies will be enemies of truth, justice, honor, purity, and nobility. They will be tyrants and criminals, resembling cancerous tumors, producing nothing but corruption and perdition. Humanity may not enjoy peace, welfare, and security so long as they live. They will be arrogant tyrants who tyrannically wronged the oppressed people for years, trampling their rights. They served as obstacles against their growth and perfection. Such obstacles will be shattered so that humanity may proceed on the path of perfection.





## Section 6

### The Rule of the Imam of the Age (AS)

Features and Plans of the Noble Imam's (AS) Rule  
Return as Reflected in the Traditions Narrated from the  
Infallibles (AS)

#### 1. Islamic Rule

Islamic rule is a means of establishing justice rather than a means of obtaining power, fame, authority, and affluence. When the Commander of the Faithful and his army were proceeding to wage war at the Battle of Jamal, they stopped at Dhī Qār, a place in the vicinity of Basra. Ibn 'Abbās said, "I joined the audience of the noble Imam (AS) when I saw that he was mending his shoes, saying to me: 'How much do these shoes cost?' I replied, 'Not much.' He said, 'By God! These torn shoes are dearer to me than ruling you, unless I may be able to establish justice and destroy falsehood.'"<sup>1</sup>

Inclination towards establishment of justice is one of the most significant features of divinely appointed leaders. In a sermon delivered after the Battle of Nahrawān the Commander of the Faithful (AS) said, "The humiliated are dear to me, so that I may establish justice by restoring to them their right and chastising the tyrant who are weak and incompetent to me."<sup>2</sup>

Muslim rulers are obliged to act upon justice and all their deeds and commands as well as removing and appointment of

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<sup>1</sup> *Nahj al-Balāgha*, sermon 33, p. 76; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 32, p. 76, tradition 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, sermon 37, p. 81.

their agents should be based on justice. Concerning administration of justice, the Commander of the Faithful (AS) said, "The best of people before God is one who prefers acting upon justice rather than injustice, even if administration of justice may entail his loss and acting upon injustice entail benefits for him."<sup>1</sup> Regarding the goals of government he said, "O God! You are All-Aware that by our rule, battles, and confrontations we never aim at obtaining power and affluence. We never intend to excel others in terms of power or amass worldly gains for ourselves, but we intend to restore the effaced signs of your religion to their proper place and improve the conditions of Your lands, so that oppressed servants live in peace and security. We intend to establish Your Laws which have been consigned to oblivion."<sup>2</sup>

In another sermon, called the Sermon of *Shaqshaqiyya*, he said, "Behold! By God who clove the seed and created man! I would have put the reigns of the she-camel of rule on her hump and would have abandon her, had there been no such multitude of people who have pledged allegiance to me, those who have circled me and have risen to render me support and if it had not been for scholars' allegiance to God to not keep silent against tyrants' gluttony and the oppression of the oppressed."<sup>3</sup>

Muslim rulers are not power thirsty, but they assume their responsibility as a divine obligation. Such rulers are not in need of taking advantage out of their rule for satisfying their own needs, but it is the rule that is in need of them. Upon his arrival at Kufa, 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (AS) was asked by an Arab merchant: "By God! You embellished c'Alīphate, rather than being embellished by c'Alīphate. You elevated its state, rather than being elevated by it. Its need for you far exceeds your need for it."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, sermon 125, p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, sermon 131, p. 189; *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 34, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, sermon 3, p. 50; *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 32, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> 'Alī 'Alayhi 'l-Salām *Manba'i Fadā'il*, p. 345.

## 2. The Manner of Rule by the Imam of the Age (AS)

Bearing the closest resemblance to the noble Prophet (SAW) in terms of character, speech, and conduct, his manner of rule will be that of the Messenger of God (AS). Abū Baṣīr said, "I heard Imam Bāqir (AS) as saying, 'The Lord of Command bears resemblance to four Prophets (AS), including the Seal of the Prophets (SAW). His resemblance to the Seal of the Prophets (SAW) is that upon his Rise, he will act in the manner of the Messenger of God (SAW).'"<sup>1</sup>

Muḥammad ibn Muslim said, "I asked Imam Bāqir (AS): 'What will be the manner of conduct of Imam Mahdī (AS) upon his Rise?' He replied, 'In the manner of the Messenger of God (SAW) in order to disseminate the Islamic faith.' I asked, 'How was the Prophet's (SAW) manner?' He said, 'The noble Prophet (SAW) abrogated all the traditions of the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance and treated people with justice. Upon his Rise, the noble Lord of the Age (AS) will abrogate former innovations and will treat people with justice.'"<sup>2</sup>

'Abd Allāh ibn 'Aṭā inquired Imam Ṣādiq (AS) about the manner of conduct of the Imam of the Age (AS). The noble Imam replied, "He will act upon the manner of the Messenger of God (SAW). He will destroy the formerly established foundation of injustice, in the same manner that the Messenger of God (SAW) destroyed the foundation established in the Age of pre-Islamic Ignorance and paved the ground anew for the establishment of the Islamic faith.""<sup>3</sup>

Imam Bāqir (AS) is narrated on the authority of Kāmil as saying, "Upon his Rise, our Riser (AS) will call people to a new matter, in the same manner that the Messenger of God did likewise.""<sup>4</sup>

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is narrated on the authority of Abū Khadija as saying, "Upon his Rise, the Rising Imam (AS) will

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 347, tradition 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 381, tradition 192.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 352, tradition 108, p. 354, tradition 112.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 366, traditions 147-148.

introduce a new call in the same manner that the Messenger of God (SAW) introduced a new call at the threshold of his Prophetic mission.”<sup>1</sup> He is also reported as saying, “The Rising Imam (AS) will introduce a new call and a new book.”<sup>2</sup> However, upon his Rise, he shall not introduce no book but the Holy Qur’an and no religion but Islam. So, he will revive the Qur’anic tradition and his laws and traditions shall be but those of the Messenger of God (SAW), formerly consigned to oblivion or subject to distortions, such that it will be as if he will introduce new materials.

The Imam of the Age (AS) will introduce the Islamic faith to people as it is. In this vein, Imam Bāqir (AS) said, “He will call people to embrace the Book of God, tradition of the noble Prophet of Islam (SAW), guardianship of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (AS), and renunciation of his enemies.”<sup>3</sup> The Imam of the Age (AS) will introduce but the Holy Qur’an, reciting it to people as it was originally revealed.<sup>4</sup> The Commander of the Faithful (AS) said, “It is as if I see our followers having pitched tents at the Mosque of Kufa, teaching people the Qur’an as it was originally revealed.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 338, tradition 28.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 354, tradition 114.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 341, under tradition 91.

<sup>4</sup> The Commander of the Faithful (AS) collected the Qur’an as it had been originally revealed. He is reported as saying, “I took an oath upon the sad demise of the Messenger of God (SAW) to not wear my robe unless I collect the Qur’an and I did not wear my robe until I fulfilled my promise (ibid, vol. 92, p. 23). Having arranged Qur’anic chapters according to their occasions of revelation and making mention of the same, others failed to accept his collection. Then, he said, “You shall not see it any longer. It is the heritage of Imamate.” Each Infallible Imam (AS) handed it to his successor and now it rests with the Remainder of Allah [the Imam of the Age (AS)], may our souls be his sacrifice. He will present it upon his Rise by Divine Grace. Imam Bāqir (AS) is reported as saying, “Those who have committed the Qur’an to their hearts will face problems on that day, since the arrangements of the two collections will not be the same (ibid, vol. 52, p. 339, tradition 85).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 364, traditions 139, 141; *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 1, p. 105, tradition 100.

The Imam of the Age (AS) will base his laws and rule on the Book of God. Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS) said, "His views and thoughts will be based on the Qur'an when others have based the Qur'an on their personal opinions."<sup>1</sup> The noble Imam (AS) will explain Qur'anic and religious truths, revive traditions, and eradicate unwarranted innovations. Imam Bāqir (AS) said, "He will not leave any undeserved innovation unless he will eradicate it."<sup>2</sup> He is also reported as saying, "Thus God will reveal the religion and eradicate unwarranted innovations and falsehood through him and his companions."<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Features of the Rule of the Imam of the Age (AS)

#### a. Centrality of Monotheism

The Imam of the Age (AS) will establish his rule on the basis of monotheism under whose auspices no call but that of monotheism will be harkened in the world and no banner but that of monotheism will be pitched on summits. Concerning the interpretation of the blessed Qur'anic verse (3:83) "To Him submitted all creatures in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly," Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "Upon the Rise of the Rising Imam (AS), there will be no land unless the calls of bearing witness to monotheism and the prophetic mission of the Messenger of God (SAW) will be heard."<sup>4</sup> He is also reported as saying, "There will be no follower of a religion unless they will profess the Islamic faith as reflected in the blessed verse 'To Him submitted all creatures in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly.'"<sup>5</sup>

The Islamic faith will be triumphant over all other religions under the rule of the noble Commander of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Nahj al-Balāgha*, sermon 138.

<sup>2</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 339.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 51, p. 47, tradition 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 240.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 338, tradition 83.

Age (AS) and it will be disseminated throughout the world, as promised by God in the Holy Qur'an (9:33): "It is He Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to make it superior over all religions even though polytheists hate it." Concerning the interpretation of the blessed verse in question, Imam Bāqir (AS) is reported as saying: "No one will survive unless they profess to the prophetic mission of Prophet Muḥammad (SAW)." He also said, "He will desist from his fights until no religion but that of Muḥammad (SAW) survives."<sup>1</sup>

God Almighty will purge the earth of disbelief, polytheism, and dissimulation through the noble Imam and will make the banner monotheism fly throughout the world and will also make the Imam (AS) establish his rule which will be based on monotheism. Regarding the last Remainder and Argument of Truth, the Messenger of God (SAW) is reported as saying in the tradition of his Ascension: "He will profess my call and will create solidarity among people on the basis of monotheism."

#### **b. Centrality of Justice**

Centrality of justice constitutes another prominent feature of the rule of the Imam of the Age (AS). Shu'ayb ibn Abī Ḥamza said, "I joined audience with Imam Ṣādiq (AS), inquiring: 'Are you the Lord of the Command?' He replied, 'No.' I asked, 'Will your son be him?' He replied, 'No.' I inquired, 'Will he be your grandson?' He said, 'No.' I asked, 'Who is he, then?' He replied, 'He is the one who will administer justice throughout the world after it brims over with injustice.'"<sup>2</sup>

Yūnus ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān said, "I joined audience with Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far, inquiring, "O son of the Messenger of God (SAW)! Are you the one who rises to establish justice?" He replied, 'I am the riser to establish justice, but the Riser who

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 291, tradition 34, p. 390, tradition 212.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 39, tradition 18.

will purge the earth of the enemies of God and will administer justice throughout the earth after brimming over with injustice will be my fifth son [in line of descent].”<sup>1</sup> Rayyān ibn Ṣalt asked Imam Riḍā (AS) the same question, to which the noble Imam (AS) replied: “I am the Lord of such Command, but I am not the one who will administer justice throughout the earth when it will brim over with injustice.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, it is one of the features of the Promised Mahdī (AS) and one of the prominent characteristics of his rule.

‘Abd al-‘Azīm Ḥasanī said, “I said to Imam Jawād (AS): ‘I hope that you be the Riser from the descendants of the Prophet (SAW) who administers justice throughout the world.’” Imam (AS) said, “We are all risers submitted to the Command of God Almighty ... but the Riser through him God will purge the earth of disbelievers and will administer justice throughout the world will be the one whose birth and life will be concealed from people’s eyes.”<sup>3</sup>

Inquired about the necessity of desiring the arrival of the last Divine Argument, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said to his companions: “Do you not wish that God Almighty administer justice in all cities?” It will be simply under the rule of the Imam of the Age (AS) that injustice will be purged to be substituted by justice. In this respect, the Holy Qur’an says (57:17), “Know that God gives life to the earth after its death.” Concerning the interpretation of the blessed verse in question, Imam Bāqir (AS) said, “Our Mahdī will rise and will give life to the world through administration of justice throughout the world after its brimming over with injustice.”<sup>4</sup> In this vein, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, “God will give life to it through the Riser’s (AS) justice administration upon his Rise, after its

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<sup>1</sup> *Kamāl al-Dīn*, vol. 2, p. 361, tradition 5; *Kifāyat al-Athar*, p. 269; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 151, tradition 6; *‘Awālim*, vol. 1/26, p. 528, tradition 932.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 322, tradition 30.

<sup>3</sup> *Kamāl al-Dīn*, vol. 2, p. 378; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 283, tradition 10, vol. 51, p. 157, tradition 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Yanābi’ al-Mawadda*, p. 429; *‘Awālim*, vol. 1/26, p. 325, tradition 578.

having withered out of the injustice of the leaders of falsehood and error.”<sup>1</sup>

The extent of his justice administration will be such that Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, “By God! His justice administration will find its way into the homes of people in the same manner that cold and heat penetrates their homes.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, justice will be established at homes and the relations among family members will be based on justice. Imam Riḍā (AS) said, “God will purge, through him, the earth of all forms of injustice and purifies it of any wrong. The scale of justice will be established among people and no man will wrong another in the entire world.”<sup>3</sup> It will be incumbent upon people to follow the rules of justice even in their religious obligations. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, “The first matter of justice to be manifested by the Rising Imam (AS) will be the call of his caller to those who will be on pilgrimage circumambulating Ka’ba as supererogatory acts of devotion to make room for those who circumambulate the House of God as obligatory acts of devotion.”<sup>4</sup>

#### 4. Plans of the Noble Imam’s (AS) Rule

##### a. Purging Disbelief and Creating a Monotheist Society

It goes without saying that using pesticides is required for a good harvest. Similarly, removing the impediments to growth is required for having an ideal and flourishing society. In other words, to have an environment devoid of blights, impurities are to be removed. Now, the divine rule of Imam Mahdī (AS) will be maintained by the pious and will aim at improvement of affairs. Those who aspire to continue their corrupt measure have to prepare themselves for the Imam’s

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<sup>1</sup> *Ḡhaybat Nu’mānī*, p. 24; *Ithbāt al-Hudāh*, vol. 3, p. 531; *Ta’wīl al-Āyāt*, vol. 2, p. 663, under tradition 14; *Awālim*, 1/26, p. 325, tradition 579.

<sup>2</sup> *Ḡhaybat Nu’mānī*, p. 297; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 362.

<sup>3</sup> *Kamāl al-Dīn*, vol. 2, p. 372; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 321, tradition 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 374.



sword. They have to know that the times of corruption, crime, treachery, and barbarism will come to an end and season will be ripe for justice administration. Those who rise against justice aiming to continue their disrespect for Divine Law and doing wrong to the oppressed will have no place in such rule. Sufyānī who massacres thousands of innocent people for their adherence to truth, Dajjāl, the cunning unbeliever who deceives thousands of people leading them to error, or any other tyrant aspiring to make people deviate from the straight path will find no security. Imam Mahdī's (AS) rule will be based on the divinely revealed religion under which monotheism will purge society of idolatry.

The banners of disbelief and dissimulation will be toppled and the only banner to fly will be that of monotheism. Those who cannot stand it will be doomed to perdition. Imam Bāqir (AS) is reported as saying, "By God! Imam Mahdī's (AS) companions and armies continue to wage battles until the world professes monotheism, rejecting association of any partners with Him."<sup>1</sup> He also said, "He will not desist from waging battle until Islam will be triumphant."<sup>2</sup> In this vein, the Ninth Imam, Imam Jawād (AS) said, "God will purge, through Imam Mahdī (AS), the earth of disbelief and denial of faith."<sup>3</sup>

#### **b. Eradication of Ignorance**

Inasmuch as Muslim notables have praised knowledge, they have renounced ignorance, regarding the latter as the source of misfortune, destruction, and adversity as reflected in many a tradition. According to the aphorisms narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS), "Ignorance leads to error. The source of all vices is ignorance. The worst affliction is ignorance. There is no poverty on a par with ignorance. Ignorance leads you on the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 345.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 291, tradition 34, p. 390, tradition 212.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 283, tradition 10.

path to perdition.”<sup>1</sup>

Ignorance results in committing errors and distancing oneself from truths and realities. One who commits some deed out of ignorance causes corruption rather than improvement. The ignorant may not attain their goals, the similitude of whom is one who has deviated from the straight path; the faster he proceeds and the more he strives, the more he distances himself from his goal. Ignorance also leads to being easily deceived. In this respect, the Commander of the Faithful (AS) says, “Ignorance leads to being deceived.”<sup>2</sup>

Satanic powers have always taken advantage of people’s ignorance leading them to submission to falsehood. They keep people ignorant in order to achieve their vicious goals. However, Muslim notables simply think about people’s happiness and wish for their growth and perfection. Therefore, they have always warned people against ignorance, from which they have always suffered. In a luminous sermon of his, Imam Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī (AS) said, “I complain before God against the people entangled with ignorance.”<sup>3</sup>

The incident of Karbalā’ was owing to people’s ignorance and one of the causes of the rise of the Lord of the Martyrs [Imam Ḥusayn] (AS) was eradication of ignorance from the society. A passage from of the prayers devoted to the Imam (AS) reads: “One who did his best in calling people towards guidance and delivering them from ignorance and perplexity of error.”<sup>4</sup> The lord of free men of the world, Imam Ḥusayn (AS) shed his pure blood in Divine Cause so that he deliver them from ignorance, perplexity, and error. It will be one of the goals of the rule of the last heir to Imam Ḥusayn (AS), namely the Lord of the Age, may our souls be his sacrifice, to eradicate ignorance from the society and disseminate knowledge. He illuminates the world by knowledge and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, p. 285, tradition 2, vol. 104, p. 267, tradition 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Maṣātiḥ al-Janān*, recitation prayer for visiting the Holy Shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (AS) on the day of ‘Arba’in (“Fortieth day after his martyrdom”).

eradicates the shadows of ignorance from the world. The Commander of the Faithful (AS) said, "He will illuminate, administer justice, and disseminate knowledge in the world after its brimming over with darkness, injustice, and ignorance."<sup>1</sup>

### c. Dissemination of Knowledge

The Islamic faith excels other religions in according significance to acquisition of knowledge. Islam is the founder of knowledge regarding its acquisition as an obligation and possession par excellence. The Commander of the Faithful (AS) said, "There is no possession on a par with knowledge."<sup>2</sup> There is no treasure as fruitful as knowledge."<sup>3</sup> Happiness and grandeur of individual and society and all good may be obtained in the light of knowledge.

The last Divine Argument is the heir to all the knowledge of Prophets (AS) and saints. He will open the formerly shut windows of knowledge to humanity and will acquaint them with secrets of creation. In his historic sermon delivered at Ghadīr Khum, the Messenger of God (SAW) said, "Know that he will be the heir to knowledge in its entirety, communicating messages from God Almighty."<sup>4</sup> The Commander of the Faithful (AS) said to Kumayl, "O Kumayl! I have opened all knowledge and the Rising Imam (AS) will put a seal on all secrets."<sup>5</sup>

All the knowledge taught by divinely appointed Prophets (AS) and their trustees to humanity from creation to the luminous Age of Arrival may not be on par with what will be acquired upon Arrival. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "Knowledge consists of 27 letters. What all Prophets (AS) have imparted consists of two letters. People have not learned but two letters.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 36, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> *Ghurar al-Hikam*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ihtijāj*, vol. 1, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 77, p. 269.

Upon his Rise the Rising Imam (AS) will reveal 25 further letters and will disseminate all the 27 letters.”<sup>1</sup>

#### d. Perfection of People's Intellects

Unaccompanied by intellectual growth, man's scientific advancement leads to loss and disaster. We are briefly reminded of this significant matter by the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS): “The knowledge of one that excels his intellect will lead to his loss.”<sup>2</sup>

Appreciation of the meaning of intellect and intellection may shed light on the meaning of the said tradition. The similitude of intellect in man is a luminous light through which a distinction may be drawn between straight path and error, truth and falsehood. Intellect is one of the greatest Divine Bounties through which man may check his concupiscent desires their upsurge. All individual and social sins stem from upsurge of concupiscent desires checking which by intellect may ward off sins.

Acquisition of knowledge unaccompanied by intellectual growth, namely without checking the concupiscent faculty, leads to loss and the further the knowledge, the further the losses; instances of which include the massacre caused by American a-bombs in Hiroshima. Such corrupt form of knowledge will not exist upon the Riser's (AS) Arrival, since the Imam of the Age (AS) will lead human intellect towards perfection. Imam Bāqir (AS) said, “Upon the Rise of our Riser (AS), God will put the Hand of His Mercy on people and thus causes concentration and perfection of their intellects.”<sup>3</sup> He is also reported as saying, “Having perfected their intellects, people will better pray God since worshipping God is a token of intellection.”<sup>4</sup> Inquired about the nature of intellect, Imam

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 336.

<sup>2</sup> *Ghurur al-Hikam*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 328.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 336.

Ṣādiq (AS) replied, "Intellect is the means through which God, the All-Merciful, is worshipped and through which one will be admitted to Paradise."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the most sincere devotions and prayers will be at the splendid Age of Arrival, as reflected in the blessed Qur'anic verse (24:55): "They worship Me and do not associate anything with Me."

### c. Eradication of Poverty and Fair Distribution of Wealth

Poverty is one of the issues rendering life bitter and unpleasant. Quoting Luqmān, the Sage, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "I tasted all bitter things, but did not find anything worse than poverty."<sup>2</sup> According to an aphorism quoted from the Commander of the Faithful (AS), "Grave [namely death] is better than poverty."<sup>3</sup> Poverty leads to loss of social position and degradation of character. People mainly belittle the poor and deprive them of many a privilege. Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS) said, "The poor is belittled, whose words positions are unheard and neglected."<sup>4</sup>

Different factors leading to poverty include the tyranny of the affluent class. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "Verily, people suffer from poverty, need, hunger, and nakedness but owing to the tyranny and sin of the rich."<sup>5</sup> Poverty is engendered by those who sit at colorful tables and pay no heed to the empty tables of the poor; those who possess all means of welfare, but never hear the moans of the indigent; those who do not restore to the poor what is due to them, but treat them like bondsmen.

The Commander of the Faithful said, "Verily, God, the Glorified, has portioned the sustenance of the poor on a par with that of the rich. The poor starve since they are not given by the affluent what is due to them."<sup>6</sup> Poverty may be owing to

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<sup>1</sup> *Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 13, p. 421.

<sup>3</sup> *Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 72, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> *Wasā'il*, vol. 6, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Nahj al-Balāgha*.

mismanagement, as policy makers may devise plans leading to affluence in a particular class and thus pave the ground for poverty and adversity of some others. In this respect, the Holy Qur'an (4:5) says, "Give not to the foolish your property which God has made a means of support for you."

Waste of wealth may also be a factor of poverty. Man may indulge in making use of his property and fails to follow the principles of management and economy, or others, vested with management of public property may commit such sin. None of these facts will exist in the universal rule of the Imam of the Age (AS), since there will be neither tyranny, nor disloyalty, nor injustice, nor exploitation, nor unwise management, nor de'Aling in fraud.

Justice will be perfectly administered under the Riser's rule and no right will be trampled. People fear God and God Almighty will bestow His Grace to them. The Holy Qur'an (7:96) says, "If the people of the towns had believed and feared God, We should have opened for them blessings from the heavens and the earth." Poverty will be eradicated under the rule of the Imam of the Age (AS) and all people will live in peace and welfare and the earth and the heavens will render aid to mankind.

### **c1. Blessings of the Heavens and the Earth**

Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS), the Commander of the Faithful said, "If our Riser (AS) rises, rain will descend from the heavens and plants will grow from the earth."<sup>1</sup> Imam Muḥtabā (AS) said, "Plants will grow from the earth, blessings will descend from the heavens, and treasures will be manifest to it."<sup>2</sup> The Noble Prophet (SAW) is reported as saying, "Unprecedented Bounties will be bestowed upon my community at the time of Mahdī (AS) when rain will descend from the heavens and the earth will not withhold the growth

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<sup>1</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 280.

of any plant.”<sup>1</sup>

## c2. Unrivalled Graces of the Imam of the Age (AS)

The Messenger of God (SAW) said, “Imam Mahdī (AS) will be generous in granting graces, merciful towards the poor, and strict with agents.”<sup>2</sup> Imam Bāqir (AS) said, “Worldly possessions will be amassed for him. Then, he will say to people, “Proceed towards something for which you broke off ties of relationship, shed bloods unlawfully, and committed sins.” He will be unrivalled in granting bounties.”<sup>3</sup>

Qundūzī narrated from the Messenger of God (SAW) as saying, “There will be a vicegerent in the last days of the world distributing innumerable possessions.”<sup>4</sup> In his *Sunan* (“Collection of Traditions”) Tirmidhī narrates from the Messenger of God (SAW) as saying, “Mahdī will rise from my community. ... Someone will go to him asking for something. He will give him so much dirham and dinars that he be able to carry.”<sup>5</sup>

## f. Enforcement of the Law of Equality, Needlessness of people

Equal distribution of wealth will constitute one of the plans of the rule of the Imam of the Age (AS). Imam Bāqir (AS) said, “Upon his Rise, our Riser from the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) will distribute wealth on the basis of Equality and justice.”<sup>6</sup> In distribution of wealth and public treasury he will follow the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Furhang va Tamaddun-i Jahān dar ‘Aṣr-i Maw‘ūd* (“Culture and Civilization of the World at the Age of the Promised One”), p. 179. In his *al-Fitan* (p. 221), Nu‘aym ibn Hammād narrates on the authority of Ṭāwūs, “The sign of Mahdī (AS) is that he will be strict with agents, generous in giving away possessions, and merciful to the poor.” See, *‘Awālim*, 1/26, p. 211, tradition 328.

<sup>3</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 351.

<sup>4</sup> *Yanābi‘ al-Mawadda*, p. 430.

<sup>5</sup> Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, vol. 3, p. 343.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 351.

footsteps of his grandfather, the Commander of the Faithful (AS), in treating all people on the basis of Equality without granting any privileges to certain people.

Talḥa and Zubayr joined the luminous audience of the noble Imam 'Alī (AS), saying, "We received a lion share of the public treasury under 'Umar's c'Alīphate." Imam said, "How much did you receive under the Messenger of God (SAW)?" They kept silent. He asked, "Did the Messenger of God (SAW) distribute the public treasury among Muslims on an equal basis?" They replied, "Aye." He said, "Which one s better, following the custom of the Messenger of God (SAW) or that of 'Umar?" They said, "Following the custom of the Messenger of God (SAW) is better, but we have some privileges. We have a longer record of service. We have endured more hardships for the Cause of Islam. We are relations to the Messenger of God (SAW)." Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS) said, "Do you excel me in your records of service, enduring hardships, and kinship to him?" They said, "You precede us in such matters and you have undoubtedly a longer record of service and you precede us in rank." Imam (AS) said, "By God! I and this servant [pointing at his servant] are on an equal basis in terms of distribution of the public treasury."<sup>1</sup>

The Imam of the Time will distribute his gifts among people on an equal basis. Imam Bāqir (AS) said, "He will distribute gifts among people twice a year and will provide people with sustenance twice a month. He will accord any privilege to anyone but treats everybody with equity."<sup>2</sup> The Messenger of God (SAW) said, "I give you the glad tidings of Mahdī's (AS) Rise from my community. ... Inhabitants of the heavens and the earth will be pleased with his conduct, since he truly distributes wealth." He was inquired, "How will he distribute it?" He replied, "He will distribute it among all

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, vol. 2, p. 110, Muballighān Publications, no. 143, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 390.



people on an equal basis.”<sup>1</sup> The noble Imam (AS) will treat everyone on an equal basis not only in distribution of wealth but also in enforcement of the law of Equality. People are all equal against law despite their differences of race and social position.

In his *al-Bayān fī Akhbār Ṣāhib al-Zamān* (“Exposition of the Accounts of the Lord of the Time”), Ganjī Shāfi‘ī narrates from the Messenger of God (SAW) as saying, “I give you the glad tidings that Mahdī (AS) will rise from my community. ... Upon his Arrival God will fill the heart of my community with needlessness.”<sup>2</sup> Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying, “He will distribute gifts among people twice a year and provides them with sustenance two times a month, such that there will not be anyone needing the alms tax. People will offer to pay their alms tax to those regarded as the needy, but they will say that they have no need for their dirham and dinar.”<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the splendid times of the Riser’s (AS) Arrival, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, “One of you will seek to find a need to pay him his alms tax, but he will fail to do likewise, since people will have been needless by Divine Grace.”<sup>4</sup> He is also reported as saying, “There will be no one to receive alms tax at that time, since all believers will have been needless.”<sup>5</sup>

#### g. Establishment of Security

Less appreciated great bounties include that of security. Security exists in a healthy society. People attain to true growth and perfection in a secure society. Fear and anxiety that render life bitter and unpleasant are engendered by insecurity. Establishment of security engenders peace of mind required for any endeavor. Security will be perfectly established, as promised by God to believers, under the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> *al-Bayān*, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 390.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 337.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 338.

universal rule of the Imam of the Age (AS) which will be the rule of the righteous and the worthy.

The Holy Qur'an (24:55) says, "God has promised those among you who believe and do righteous deeds that He shall appoint them rulers in the land ... and He shall give them in exchange a safe security after their fear." Regarding the blessed verse in question, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported as saying that the occasion of revelation of the verse is the Rising Imam (AS) and his companions.<sup>1</sup>

There will be an unprecedented security at time of Arrival which may be regarded as a feature of the rule of the Imam of the Age (AS). In this vein, the Commander of the Faithful (AS) is reported as saying, "God will remove the vicissitudes through us. ... upon the Rise of our Riser (AS), ... a woman with a basket on her head may traverse the distance from Iraq to Syria on foot safeguarded from falling a victim to a beast of prey without entertaining any fear."<sup>2</sup> In other words, all causes of insecurity will be eradicated in that splendid age.

Poverty constitutes one of the factors of insecurity, urging some indigent people to commit theft and cause insecurity in society. As mentioned above, all people will enjoy welfare under the just rule of the Imam of the Age (AS), such that there will be one needy individual. Weak faith in God, a factor leading to insecurity, is the source of corruption and crime, but people's hearts, relying on welfare and security to be maintained at that time, will be brimming over with faith and certitude.

The third cause of insecurity is the weakness of state of which some opportunists take advantage thereby giving birth to social insecurity. Nonetheless, the universal rule of the Imam of the Age (AS) will be the most powerful state causing the humiliation of the arrogant of the world. When a society happens to be free from causes of insecurity, security and

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<sup>1</sup> *Ghaybat Nu'mānī*, p. 247, tradition 35; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 58, tradition 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 316.

peace prevails over it and everyone may honor their obligations towards God Almighty.

#### **h. Prosperity in the earth**

The earth will be rejuvenated at the splendid Age of Arrival of the Imam (AS) such that there will exist nothing in ruins. Imam Bāqir (AS) said, "There will be nothing in ruins but everything will prosper."<sup>1</sup> Deserts and all parched plains will be verdant and those traveling from the east to the west pass by gardens and orchards at all times. The Commander of the Faithful (AS) said, "A woman traversing the distance from Iraq to Syria on foot will tread but on verdure."<sup>2</sup>

Rivers will ever flow on verdant lands. There will spring climate free from scorching sun and biting cold. Trees will bear fruit all year round such that their heavy branches will touch the ground. Summer and winter produce will be available in all seasons. Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS) in a sermon of his called Sermon of Exposition (*Khutbat al-Bayān*), said, "At that time, trees will be in fruit twice a year." Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "Rains will descend from the heavens; trees will be in fruit; the earth will be verdant, adorning itself for its inhabitants ... The Rising Imam (AS) will say, 'Eat and drink! Enjoy yourselves for your past deeds.'<sup>3</sup> The earth will prosper and illuminated by Imam Mahdī's (AS) grace: "The earth will be illuminated by its Lord's light upon the Rise of our Riser (AS) and servants of God will have no need for the sun, as darkness will vanish."<sup>4</sup>

It goes without saying that disappearance of the sun is not intended by needlessness of it, but it signifies that it will be overshadowed by the luminous Imam of the Age (AS) and there will remain no trace of shadows. Imam Muḥtabā (AS) said, "He

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<sup>1</sup> *Kamāl al-Dīn*, vol. 1, p. 331.

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 316.

<sup>3</sup> "Eat and drink at ease for what you sent before you in days past!" The Holy Qur'an, 69:24; see *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 53, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 52, p. 337.

will fill the earth with justice and light.”<sup>1</sup> The Imam of the Age (AS) will construct colossal mosques with numerous huge gates. He will widen and develop the roads: “He will widen the roads to the measure of 60 cubits.”<sup>2</sup>

## **i. Removal of Vicissitudes**

### **i.1. Curing Ailments**

The Lord of Worshippers (*Sayyid al-Sājidīn*), Imam ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn (AS), said, “God Almighty will cure the ailments of all believers and will rejuvenate them upon the Rise of the Rising Imam (AS).”<sup>3</sup>

### **i.2. Elimination of Hatred**

The Commander of the Faithful (AS) said, “Upon the Rise of our Rising Imam (AS) ... hatred will be eliminated from the hearts of God’s servants and beasts of prey and other animals will live in peace.”<sup>4</sup>

## **j. Restoring Rights**

“Upon his Rise, the Rising Imam(AS) will administer justice, put an end to injustice, and make the roads secure; the earth will produce its bounties and the Imam will restore all the rights.”<sup>5</sup>

## **k. Dajjāl Shall be Slain**

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, “God Almighty had created fourteen light 14,000 thousand years before He created the world, the last of whom is the Riser (AS). He will rise after his period of occultation, slay Dajjāl, and purge the earth of injustice.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 333.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 364, tradition 138.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 316.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 338, tradition 83.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, vol. 51, p. 144, tradition 8.

## I. Destruction of Satan

Ishāq ibn 'Ammār said, "I inquired Imam Ṣādiq (AS) about "the appointed time" mentioned in the Qur'anic verse (15:37-38) 'He said, 'You are one of those reprieved till the Day of the time appointed.' The Imam (AS) said, 'The day of the Rise of the Rising Imam (AS) is intended by 'the appointed time.'"<sup>1</sup>

## m. Conquest of the East and West of the World

The Messenger of God (SAW) is reported as saying, "The Imams (AS) to succeed me are twelve in number; the first of whom are you, 'Alī (AS), and the last one will be the Rising Imam (AS) at whose hand God will cause the conquest of the east and west of the world."<sup>2</sup>

## n. The Question of Return

Belief in return (*raj'a*) constitutes one of the Shī'ī tenets and obligations of the religion of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS). Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "One who does not believe in return is not one of us."<sup>3</sup> Return denotes belief in the return of the Pure Imams (AS), some perfect believers, and sheer disbelievers to the world with their own corporeal bodies and souls which they possessed in their lifetime. In his most valuable work, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 'Allāma Majlisī records more than 200 traditions regarding this significant doctrine, saying that the traditions concerning the return of Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (AS) and Imam Ḥusayn (AS) have been successively transmitted and those regarding other Imams (AS) approach such degree of transmission.<sup>4</sup>

Such return is attested in the accounts of former nations and receives emphasis in the Holy Qur'an. The blessed verse 243 from *Sūrat al-Baqara* (2) reads, "Did you not see those

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 376.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 52, p. 378, tradition 184.

<sup>3</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 53, p. 92, tradition 101.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, vol. 53, p. 122.

who fled from their homes n thousands fearing death? God said to them, 'Die!' Then, He restored them to life." Imam Ṣādiq (AS) was inquired about the blessed verse (27:83), "The day when We shall gather a group out of every nation." Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "What do people say about it?" The narrator replied, "They say it is about the Day of Resurrection." Imam (AS) said, "Will God gather a group out of every nation and leave the rest? This verse is about the return. The verse concerning Resurrection is the blessed verse [18:47] "We shall gather them all together so as to leave not one of them."<sup>1</sup>

The account of the Seven Sleepers (Companions of the Cave, *Aṣḥāb al-Kahf*) clearly reflects the question of return. The Messenger of God (SAW) is reported as saying, "What has occurred in former nations will occur in this community as well."<sup>2</sup>

#### **Q. Who will return and what are their characteristics?**

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, "The return only applies to some individuals who lived in absolute faith or faithlessness."<sup>3</sup>

##### **a. Absolute Belief**

Traditions reflect that those who have purified their faith will return. In other words, such people are unadulterated by concupiscent desires, doubt, and dissimulation. Their faith is ever invincible against tempests, vicissitudes, enemy propaganda, and the corruption of the society.

##### **b. Obedience to the Guardianship of the Imam (AS) through Acquisition of True Knowledge**

The Messenger of God (SAW), in a detailed tradition in which he mentioned the Pure Imams (AS) and the last of them, Imam Ḥujjat ibn al-Ḥasan (AS), said to Salmān, "O Salmān!

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 53, p. 51, tradition 27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 53, p. 59, tradition 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Mukhtaṣar Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 106; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 53, p. 39, tradition 1.

You understand him and anyone who is like you and one who obeys his guardianship through true knowledge.”<sup>1</sup> True knowledge of Imam (AS), namely that beyond knowledge of his name, patronymic title (*kunya*) lies in knowing Imam’s (AS) exalted rank and position in the system of creation, his characteristics, privileges, and closeness to the Creator of the world. Such knowledge entails according precedence to the Imam (AS) and his commands, in the same manner that Salmān treated the leader of his times.

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, “Salmān accorded precedence to the command of the leader of his times [namely, the Messenger of God (SAW)] and such characteristic of his had led to his exalted position.

In the aforementioned Prophetic tradition, the Messenger of God (SAW) said to Salmān, “O Salmān! Whoever truly knows the Pure Imams (AS) and follows them, befriends their friends, and renounces their enemies, is by God one of us. He enters wherever we enter and settles wherever we settle.”<sup>2</sup>

In summary, those who have, for long, awaited the Imam’s (AS) Arrival, tolerated the hardships of the period of occultation, been eager to witness his Rise, wished to render him aid and accompany him in his holy war, and departed the world in such state of eagerness, may set their hopes to return in the glorious times of his Arrival and witness the triumph of the Imam (AS) and his glorious rule.

In his *Ḥadiqat al-Shi’a* Muqaddas Ardabīlī narrates from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) as saying, “There is no believer aspiring to accompany the Imam of the Age (AS) and pray for hastening of his Arrival, unless an angel calls him by his name in his grave, saying: ‘Arise if you wish and join his audience or sleep until the Day of Resurrection!’” Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said, “A multitude of people will return to the world and live under the true rule.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 53, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 53, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> *Mikyaal al-Makārim*, vol. 1, p. 459, tradition 776, quoting *Ḥadiqat al-Shi’a*, p. 762.

The prayer of allegiance also treats of the question of return. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is narrated as saying, "Whoever recites it forty morns will be a supporter of the Imam of the Age (AS) and if he departs the world prior to the Imam's (AS) Arrival will be restored to life by God so as to accompany his Imam (AS) in waging jihad against his enemies."

"O God! O Lord of Glorious Light! O Lord of Exalted Position! Lord of tempestuous seas! O Revealer of the Torah, the Injil, and Pslams [*Zabūr*]! O Lord of shade and warmth of the sun! O Revealer of the Glorious Qur'an! O Lord of Archangels! O Lord of Prophets and Messengers! O Lord! I invoke you by Your Magnanimous Essence, Your Illuminating Splendor, and Your Eternal Sovereignty! O Living! O Eternal Being! I invoke You by Your Name through Which the heavens and the lands have been illuminated! The Name through Which former and prospective generations attain to perfection! O Pre-Eternal Being! O Ever-Existing Being! O You Who preceded all beings in Your Existence! O Reviver of the departed! O Cause of death of the living! O Being Who are the only Object of Worship! O Lord! By our master, the truly guided guide who will rise upon Your Command! Your Salutations be on him and all his pure forefathers! Send them the greetings of all believing men and women at every corner of the earth, deserts, mountains, seas, and dry lands. Greetings of my parents; those as glorious as Divine Throne and the Greatness of His Words, to such an extent that Divine Omniscience reckons them, such that they are included in the Divine Book. O Lord! At this daybreak and morn and all days of my life, I renew my verbal and heartfelt allegiance to that beloved one which I will never break. O Lord! Reckon me as one of the supporters of that dignified Imam! One of those who hasten in his obedience, one of those who unconditionally obey his commands, one of his supporters and those who excel others in obedience to his commands, one of those who seek to fall martyrs before him! O Lord! I invoke you to take me out of my grave, if death, an inevitable command applying to Your servants, serves an obstacle between me and that beloved one, while in shroud, having



unsheathed my sword, holding my spear, at the service of the caller who calls out to the one addressing people in cities and deserts. O Lord! Show me that most beautiful and loveable countenance and thereby give light to my eyes! Hasten toward rendering him aid and deliverance upon his rise! Pave his path towards achievement of his goals! Lead me to his luminous path! Render his command obeyed! Render him support! O Lord! Render Your lands and cities prosperous by his presence and restore Your servants to life, since You have Truly said: "Prior to the Rise of that dignified Imam, corruption wields sway in the land and on the sea owing to what people have done." So, O Lord! Make Your guardian and vicegerent, the son of the daughter of Your Messenger, the name sake of your Messenger, Muḥammad (SAW), arrive so that he conquers and destroys all falsehood and maintain truth. O Lord! Render him a safe haven to Your oppressed servants, those who find no support but You. O Lord! Let him revive the commands of Your Book [the Holy Qur'an] Which has been consigned to oblivion! Let him maintain the manifest signs of Your religion and the righteous deeds of Your Prophet (SAW)! O Lord! Protect him like one of those whom Your protect from evil doers! O Lord! Make Your Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) happy by his meeting his worthy descendant and those following his command and have Mercy on us who live in adversity owing to his occultation! O Lord! Render grieves of this community into happiness by the arrival of the beloved one in occultation! O Lord! Hasten his Arrival, since they [Your enemies] think that his Arrival is delayed, though we believe that it is approaching us by Your Grace! O Most Affectionate of all the affectionate!"

Then, the reciter of the prayer is supposed to touch his right thigh three times, saying: "Hasten! Hasten o master! O Lord of the Age!"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ṣaḥīfa Ṣādiqiyya*, p. 328, prayer 396.